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From Theory to Practice: Creating Intermediate ESL Reading Materials Based on Current SLA Research and Theories

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In *Relating SLA Research to Language Teaching Materials*, Cook (1998) suggests "a number of ways in which SLA research findings can help improve course books and thereby enhance the learning of a large number of students."

This paper outlines Cook's general suggestions and discusses the findings of several research papers directly related to the teaching of L2 vocabulary. After creating a theoretical framework for teaching intermediate-level L2 vocabulary, the author created a sample unit to be used with ESL students at the Intermediate Level (CLB Reading Benchmarks 3-7). These pedagogical materials directly complement current thinking and seem to result in greater student success. Although no formal research has been done, the materials have been field-tested by two ESL teachers at Conestoga College (the author and Natasha Morgan) with success.

Cook's Suggestions, Current Research and Implications for the Material Maker

1. *"L2 users are speakers in their own rights, not imitation native speakers." (Cook 1998)*

   The goal of L2 materials should be to encourage successful transmission and reception of messages, not to judge students against the knowledge and production of L1 speakers. Within each unit, the materials should provide for success. Materials, at the intermediate level, do not have to include tracts of text or novel schema. The students can learn new vocabulary and pronunciation

(cont'd on p. 3)

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From the Editor

Hello Everyone,

We hope you have had an enjoyable summer. In our first electronic issue, we feature some of the most interesting presentations, workshops and papers delivered at last November's TESL Ontario Conference. We regret not being able to publish all submissions.

Brigid Kelso
Contact Editor

N.B. Don't forget to visit our website at www.teslontario.org and set up your ID and password on the private members area to access the fall issue of *Contact*, which will be available near the end of September.

Apology

An omission was made in our special Research Symposium Issue of *Contact*. I would like to acknowledge the contribution to the symposia made by the following discussants: Sophie Beare, Sharon Rajabi and Shailja Verma. I apologize for the omission. The participation of these discussants was important and greatly appreciated.

Robert Courchêne
Guest Editor
2002 Research Symposium Issue

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patterns in the L2, using shorter, more familiar, more satisfying text-processing situations.

Cobb (1999) illustrates clearly that L2 learners need a strong vocabulary base before being left to read. His research in "Carrying Learners Across the Lexical Threshold" (1999) concludes that more emphasis on vocabulary building must occur. Cobb found that even students with several years of current ESL training, entered university preparation classes with very low levels of vocabulary.

The belief in ESL teaching over the past two decades that students at the intermediate level can learn from guessing seems incorrect. Teachers must return to placing a strong emphasis on bottom-up skills until the advanced level. (Please see Chart 1)

"To guess the meaning of unknown words and continue reading – is both insufficient and inappropriate – bottom-up processing skills, like attention to vocabulary, cannot be ignored. – lack of vocabulary knowledge short-circuits reading comprehension – while extensive reading may be appealing, it may not be applicable to beginning students." (Laufer 1997)

"The L1 is always present in the student's mind at some level." (Cook 1998)

The L1 is not something to be ignored or punished. The L1 is an asset and comparing and linking to the L1 is beneficial. Teachers should encourage explorations of the differences between the two systems and provide many opportunities for this.

The use of bilingual dictionaries and classroom discussion in the L1 was heavily discouraged through the 1980s and 1990s. This author herself was threatened with dismissal for refusing to forbid her students to speak in Chinese and Serbo-Croatian to each other as they worked on exercises. Her coordinator said that current research showed that students should be forced to use only the target language. An extensive review of the literature showed no such evidence, and yet there are still teachers who forbid the use of the L1 in class (and even charge 25 cents for violations!) and who forbid the use of translation and electronic dictionaries.

Research supports the validity of accessing the L1 both for developing the L2 and for time efficiency. "Instructing students to guess at meaning diverts attention away from syntactic process – it is not a time-saving strategy – bilingual dictionaries should not be ruled out." (Haynes 1993. Patterns and Perils of Guessing 2nd Language Reading)

2. *"Learners tackle some aspects of L2 learning in different ways." (Cook 1998)*

It is now an accepted fact that learning styles vary. These different ways of processing can be an asset to group work and should be discussed, clarified and utilized in class. The text should contain discussions of personal variables and a variety of paths (types of exercises) so that all students can access the information being presented.

In *The Menu Approach* (Rausch 2000) states that "the fullest potential for language learning strategies ultimately lies in self-accessible instructional materials supporting autonomous strategy use." (p. 1) We need to strive to ensure that classroom materials include a variety of teaching styles and options for students to choose from.

There are cultural expectations about learning and teaching. The text should make explicit that it is both recognising and providing practice opportunities in several modes (traditional/student-centred), and leading students to be comfortable with new avenues for learning and ways of working in groups.

At the height of the communicative method in Canada in the late 1980s, many ESL learners wasted time in class struggling to come to grips with the student-centred methods being used. Teachers were not cautious enough in ensuring that there was a meeting ground in terms of student expectations and teacher methodology and materials, especially with students raised in Asian educational systems.

"The teacher-centred classroom in East Asia leads to a closure-oriented style – these students dislike ambiguity, uncertainty or fuzziness." (Zhenhui, p. 2) The students are accustomed to a variety of strategies such as "memorization, planning, analysis, sequenced repetition, detailed outlines and lists, structured review and a search for perfection." (p. 3)

While this author believes it is crucial that the class and the teacher be communicative, caution is indicated in choice of material and strategies. Students need guidance and explanations before being asked to use communicative materials.

Traditional-looking materials with communicative interpretation work well.

Studies also indicate that the way we approach, interpret and remember information is culturally based. Chu examined the ability of students to recall information based on the cultural format in which it was presented. "Our findings support philosophical and psycholinguistic claims that readability is anchored in cultural expectations rather than universally normed cognitive ones." (p. 532) 'The Chinese EFL students in this study recalled a significantly larger percentage of text units from the four English texts written in Chinese rhetorical convention than they did from the four parallel texts written in English rhetorical convention in both immediate recall and delayed recall." (p. 529)

Since the goal at this stage is vocabulary and pattern-building rather than rhetorical convention, materials and methods, especially at the lower levels (1-6) should present vocabulary in an easily accepted format.

3. *"The aspects of syntax that need to be acquired mostly concern vocabulary." "Vocabulary items need to be linked to structural context and concepts." (Cook 1998)*

   For the past few decades, vocabulary teaching per se has been out of fashion and yet most current research indicates that lexis is central to language. Lewis, in the *The Lexical Approach* (1993), states that "Language should be recorded together which characteristically occurs together."(p.143)

   The text should include categories of language and examples of words in phrases so that meaning and syntactical restrictions become clear. The learner has a huge need to acquire lexical entries. The text should provide ample opportunities for students to encounter new chunks of vocabulary in context and absorb the characteristics of those chunks. The characteristics to be discussed should include syntax, concepts and phonology.

   Gabrielatos, in *The Inference Approach* (2000) reminds teachers that "Language out of context has only POTENTIAL for meaning"(p.2). Even if a word list is given, the teacher should always present language in such a way that a context can be derived and thought about.

   Conceptual organization should play a role in the choice of vocabulary for the text to ease absorption.

4. *"Pronunciation is needed for internal purposes in the learner' minds." (Cook 1998)*

   We keep new information from being lost by processing it through an articulatory loop (saying it over and over either aloud or to ourselves). The text should provide opportunities for the students to develop reception (and production) of English sounds so that a database of sounds that students can use to move information from short-term to long-term storage is developed. Pronunciation should be seen as integral to learning, not a final icing on the cake. (The author defines pronunciation as an ability to process the sounds of the language – not in any way inferring that a native-like accent is the goal.)

   In general, think that a good memory leads to vocabulary retention, and yet research suggests that vocabulary use likely develops memory proficiency and not vice versa. Studies in memory have proven that short-term memory works less efficiently in the L2 than in the L1 (Cook, 1998). Teachers need to give students a chance to analyze words and phrases and create a database of stored sounds to help build short-term memory. This, in turn, will aid further vocabulary retention.

5. *"L2 users need to learn about the properties of the L2 writing system." (Cook, 1998)*

   The text should not leave to chance the student's recognition of how the L2 system differs from the L1. Furthermore, both low-level aspects (printing, spelling, pen-holding and sounding out) and high-level aspects (discourse connections, stylistic variation and schemas) along with the materials being used should be overtly discussed.

   In recent years, the emphasis in even lower-level ESL materials has been on developing higher-level reading skills. In the 1980s, researchers started to caution using this L1 approach in an L2 classroom.

Alderson concludes, "It is possible that until students reach a threshold of language proficiency, reading strategy instruction will not be helpful. (1984)" Materials for the intermediate level must include conscious attempts to increase language proficiency in order to improve reading skills. Materials can be

used as an avenue for learning language patterns and vocabulary.

Other research concurs:

"Mastery of lower-level reading skills is necessary for the development of higher-level skills in reading. Teacher education should include instruction in the importance of fostering decoding skills." (Hilferty, 1996)

"Students reading narrative texts need to know at least 98% of the vocabulary they encounter in order to read with comprehension without using a dictionary. Pre-teaching of unknown vocabulary seems indicated for most learners with most texts." (Hsueh-chao 2000.)

"Automaticity in processing certain text elements increases the cognitive resources available for processing text elements that have not become automatic yet – this offers an example of how bottom-up processing practice such as vocabulary building can support reading comprehension." (Coady 1993.)

It is easier for students to concentrate on developing skills when processing is not burdened by too much new information. Therefore, our ideal intermediate materials will feature universal topics.

"If incidental vocabulary acquisition is the goal, pedagogic tasks should be structured around readings for which the learners have a high degree of background knowledge."(Huntley 1992) and from Coady 1997 "Beginning level readers need to read texts that match their background knowledge to free resources for lower-level vocabulary processing. – Learners cannot learn new words from context until the threshold of 5000-8000 words has been reached."

6. Cook also points out that the text should be:

   usable with large groups (not just suitable for pairs and triads)

   usable with unilingual or multilingual groups

   in step with teachers and students (not so distant from existing practice as to be unacceptable).

Cook's guidelines provide an excellent start to the production of theoretically sound materials for SL texts for use with a wide variety of students in varying contexts and group sizes.

The teacher text From Reader to Reading teacher: Issues and Strategies for Second Language Classrooms (Richards 1997) offers excellent suggestions for preparing lessons in reading. The first page of the following unit is devised from their suggestions on what a teacher should think about in preparing for a class.

The following materials are samples from the author's attempt to prepare ESL vocabulary materials based on current research. Comments and suggestions are welcome at kbrillinger@conestogac.on.ca.

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Reading Lesson 1
Crossing the Vocabulary Threshold

Vocabulary and Reading Lessons: Unit One

1. **What is to be learned?**

   In each booklet, you will learn to use the English words for 17 categories and terms.

2. How will I learn these words and improve my reading and speaking skills?

   You will do exercises related to words and ideas that you already know in your first language. You will practise using them in various ways. You'll encounter the key words and categories 5-10 times as you do the unit.

   Research in L2 vocabulary learning has shown that most students can recall words 5-8 times after ***actively*** encountering them and that categorization helps with retention.

   After learning the words, you will practise again with some related readings.

3. What kind of activities will I do?

   You will do various tasks that ask you to use English in different ways. The hope is that everyone will find something to suit his/her learning style and personality. Many activities will include partner or small group work as the goal is ***communication*** and ***resource use*** as well as ***vocabulary*** and ***reading***-skill-building. Make sure to access your colleagues, your teacher and your dictionary efficiently and try to enjoy the exercises and the chance to communicate and guess. Research has shown that collaborating is the most successful way to learn.

4. How will I know if I have learned the words and categories?

   We will have a 1-page quiz at the middle and end of each unit so that you can check your progress. The teacher will check the class average and the class can decide if they want more practice with the same items or if they want to start the next unit.

Lesson A
Building Language Skills: Categories

You have 4 tasks to complete as a small group or for homework:

- Scan each sentence and highlight the three content words that form a category.
- Identify the category of the 3 items and write it in the blank.
- Write at least one more example of an item in that category on the 2nd line.
- Make a list of three things commonly related to this category (mini-brainstorming).

Number one is done for you as an example.

1. Let's buy some **apples**, **bananas** and **cherries**. fruit

   strawberries melons grapes

   cost freshness taste

2. You need to get a monitor, a mouse and a hard-drive.
3. It's easy to divide 20, 28 and 42 by 2.
4. The arthritis is affecting her wrists, her knuckles and her spine.
5. The Pope can speak fluent Polish, Italian and French.
6. Crocodiles, lizards and iguanas all lay eggs.
7. We have no cure for diabetes, AIDS or Alzheimer's.
8. In the woods, flies, mosquitoes and ticks can bite you.
9. Pots are usually made of steel, iron or copper.
10. In geometry you learn to measure circles, triangles and squares.
11. The pants come in small, medium and large.
12. The deer ate the bark, branches and leaves.
13. The first flowers of spring are crocuses, tulips and daffodils.
14. Potatoes, onions and turnips have to be dug out of the ground.

15. After school, she eats cookies, pretzels or crackers.

Lesson B
Building Language Skills: Offering Choices Within a Category

You have 3 tasks to complete:

- Read the sentence and place a backslash between each phrase.
- Ask your partner each question, making sure you have a low-rise intonation curve after the 1st phrase.
- Circle your partner's answer. (Change roles after # 9)

1. Do you like roses or orchids better?
2. Do you eat more chips or popcorn?
3. Do you fear cockroaches or spiders more?
4. Do women in your native country generally wear bigger or smaller sizes than in Canada?
5. Do you have more trouble with your computer's keyboard or memory?
6. Which do you think makes a better table shape: a rectangle or an oval?
7. Which is easier to cure: cancer or tuberculosis (TB)?
8. Which is more valuable: gold or silver?
9. Which joint is more likely to be hurt playing tennis: a knee or an elbow?
10. Which has a bigger number of native speakers: Mandarin or English?
11. Which is easier to divide: 17 or 70?
12. Which do you prefer: carrots or radishes?
13. Which better describes your problems right now: huge or tiny?
14. Which is more useful for starting a fire: a tree trunk or branches?
15. Do you think snakes are amazing or horrible?
16. Is your lucky number an even number or an odd number?
17. Is a butterfly or a dragonfly more colourful?

Lesson C
Building Language Skills: Category Practice

You have 2 tasks to complete as a small group:

- Identify the category of the 3 items and write it in the blank.
- In the 2nd blank, write one more example of an item in that category.

				Category	Example
1.	ankle	elbow	knee	____	____
2.	branch	trunk	roots	____	____
3.	butterfly	moth	dragonfly	____	____
4.	cancer	tuber-culosis (TB)	diabetes	____	____
5.	carrots	beets	onions	____	____
6.	chips	popcorn	pretzels	____	____
7.	cockroach	ant	spider	____	____
8.	dress	skirt	pantyhose	____	____
9.	English	Spanish	Arabic	____	____
10.	gold	copper	steel	____	____
11.	huge	tiny	medium	____	____
12.	monitor	modem	memory	____	____
13.	oval	rectangle	square	____	____
14.	rose	orchid	carnation	____	____
15.	seven	eleven	thirty-one	____	____
16.	snake	chame-leon	alligator	____	____
17.	two	eight	forty-two	____	____

Lesson D
Building Language Skills: Giving Opinions

You have 2 tasks to complete alone (and then we will discuss our opinions briefly):

- Read each section.
- Write ABSOLUTELY TRUE, TOTALLY RIDICULOUS or WHO KNOWS? beside each statement.

1. All men should be forced to wear pantyhose at least once so that they can feel how uncomfortable they are.
   My opinion: _____
2. Gold jewellery should be at least 22 karats or it's not really gold.
   My opinion: _____
3. It's impossible to get a decent job nowadays without very strong computer skills.
   My opinion: _____
4. Kids shouldn't have to memorize the multiplication or division of numbers because everyone has calculators these days.
   My opinion: _____
5. Human beings prefer circles to squares.
   My opinion: _____
6. Governments should not pay for the lung cancer treatment of people who smoke.
   My opinion: _____
7. It is dangerous to repeatedly crack your knuckles.
   My opinion: _____
8. There are fewer butterflies today than there were 10 years ago.
   My opinion: _____
9. We have no right to kill insects. They are a part of nature and important to the food chain. If a mosquito lands on your arm, you should not kill it.
   My opinion: _____

Lesson E
Building Language Skills: Following Directions

You have 2 tasks to complete with a partner:

- Read each set of directions.
- Follow them exactly.

1. Draw a big bee in the shape to the right and label two parts of its body.
2. Translate the following sentence into your language(s) and write the translation on the board. "It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." (Shakespeare)
3. Draw a small tree in the upper-left-hand corner of this paper, have a partner guess what kind of tree it is and label it.
4. Write the name of the snake that comes out of a basket in India while music is played on a flute by a man in a turban. _____
5. Add six more numbers to the following series: 8-16-24-32-40-__ --__ --__ --__ --__ --__
6. In each box, write the name for 1 shape that you can see from where you are sitting and draw the shape above the word.
7. Draw something that is always very tiny in the circle and something that is always very huge in the oval.
8. Dress the following stick-person in clothes women used to wear and write on the lines to the left of it the approximate year and the place.

Lesson F
Building Language Skills: Giving Opinions

You have 2 tasks to complete alone (and then we will discuss our opinions briefly):

- Read each section.
- Write ABSOLUTELY TRUE, TOTALLY RIDICULOUS or WHO KNOWS? beside each statement.

1. English will be the world's dominant language for the rest of history.
   My opinion: _____
2. Diseases spread more rapidly nowadays because people come into contact with each other more than they did 50 years ago.
   My opinion: _____
3. Flowers are the perfect gift for someone who is sick and in the hospital.
   My opinion: _____
4. Gold jewellery is more of a status symbol than a decoration.
   My opinion: _____
5. Humans were inspired to invent the airplane by watching insects fly.
   My opinion: _____
6. More people have asthma nowadays because there are not as many trees cleaning the air.
   My opinion: _____
7. North Americans eat more vegetables than Asians do.
   My opinion: _____

8. Snack food is a necessity because life is so hectic these days.
   My opinion: _____
9. Governments should not pay for the lung cancer treatment of people who smoke.
   My opinion: _____
10. The brighter the colour of the vegetable, the better it is for your health.
    My opinion: _____

Lesson G
Building Language Skills: Quiz to Check What You Can Remember

Tasks:

- Write down 2 examples of each category.
- Mark the major syllable stress.

1. Body Joints	_____	_____
2. Computer Parts	_____	_____
3. Crawling Insects	_____	_____
4. Directions	_____	_____
5. Diseases	_____	_____
6. Even Numbers	_____	_____
7. Flying Insects	_____	_____
8. Kinds of Flowers	_____	_____
9. Kinds of Reptiles	_____	_____
10. Kinds of Women's Clothes	_____	_____
11. Languages	_____	_____
12. Metals	_____	_____
13. Odd Numbers	_____	_____
14. Parts of a Tree	_____	_____
15. Shapes	_____	_____
16. Sizes	_____	_____
17. Snacks	_____	_____
18. Vegetables	_____	_____

Lesson H
Building Language Skills: Optional Review Exercise

You have 2 tasks to complete alone (and then we will discuss our opinions briefly):

- Read each question.
- Write the answer on the line.

1. What are the parts of the body that bend to facilitate movement? _____
2. What are the machines that allow us to word process, store data, and send email, etc.?
   _____
3. What do babies, caterpillars and worms do instead of walking? _____
4. What do you call serious illnesses like pneumonia and bronchitis? _____
5. What do you call a number that can be divided by 2 with no remainder?
   _____
6. What do birds, butterflies and hot air balloons can do? _____
7. What do you call plants that have beautiful petals? _____
8. What do you call cold-blooded creatures that lay eggs? _____
9. What do you call the things we cover our bodies with? _____
10. What is the system with which humans use to communicate? _____
11. What do you call the material that pots and pans are made of? _____
12. What do you call numbers that have a remainder when divided by 2? _____
13. What do you call the big leafy things that give us shade from the sun? _____
14. What do you call the image made by a set of lines? _____
15. What do you call the measurements for clothes? _____
16. What do you call food that you eat when it is not really mealtime? _____

17. What do you call the food group that is not grains or fruit but has no animal products?

_____

Lesson H
Using Language Skills: You and the Insect World

You have 2 tasks to perform with a partner:

- Ask your partner each of the following questions.
- Alternate after question 7.

1. When, where and why did you last kill an insect?
2. What kind of insect would you prefer not to kill and why?
3. What insect do you consider the most irritating to people?
4. What insect do you think is the most deadly?
5. Is there any insect common to your home country that is not found in Canada?
6. What is something that amazes or impresses you about a particular insect?
7. What's the most disgusting thing that you can think of about insects?
8. Did you study insects in school? If yes, in what subject and what grade?
9. Pretend to be a person with each of the following:
   - really bad head lice
   - a really itchy mosquito bite
   - a bad case of intestinal worms
10. Do you think that there are more kinds of insects in this city or in Mexico City? Why?
11. What are some methods of getting rid of mosquitoes?
12. Name one negative and one positive thing about bees.
13. Draw a different insect on each of the flowers on this page.

Lesson I
Part Eight: Pre-Viewing Exercise

It's a good idea to think about what you are going to read before you start. Read each question and glance at the next page just long enough to answer it. Jot down a point form answer.

1. What is the topic of this reading?
2. What are some possible answers to the question in the title?
3. Think about yourself and your friends and colleagues. What changes in your behaviour in the winter?
4. Read the first paragraph and list the unfamiliar words. Check their meanings in a dictionary.
5. Scan through the second paragraph and highlight every content word. How many are there? _____ How many of the content words are main verbs? _____
6. Draw the three stages of the life cycle of a fly. Refer to the third paragraph if you need vocabulary to label the stages.
7. The fourth paragraph will talk about bees. List 3 facts that you know about bees:
8. What are 3 beautifully colored insects?

Lesson J
Insect Reading Exercise

Read the text. Circle any words that you want to practise pronouncing or talk about after.

Where Do Canadian Bugs Go In Winter?

Have you ever wondered where bugs go during our bitterly cold winters? Without the familiar chirping of crickets at twilight or the buzzing of honey bees at dawn, it may seem that they simply disappear without a trace at the first snowfall. Not true – although you can't see them, they may be right under your nose!

Unlike you and I, insects are cold-blooded. Their body temperatures rise and fall depending on the temperature of the air around them. Most adult insects are unable to survive our harsh, cold winter and die when the thermometer hits zero degrees. Although the adult insects die, their eggs are able to survive the winter and hatch in spring.

Other insects, such as flies, wasps and beetles, survive the winter months as larva. After an adult insect lays an egg, the larva hatches and bores itself into the warmth of the plant tissue where it will live until spring.

Some insects stay alive all winter by sharing body heat. Unlike wasps that die off when the weather turns cold, honeybees heat their hives by crowding together in the centre. The inner bees move their bodies and beat their wings while another group of bees makes a ring around the outside to keep the warmth from escaping. Throughout the year they also collect a substance made of plant resins to "caulk" their hives and seal any cracks.

Aquatic insects, such as dragonflies, spend the winter underwater as a nymph, a life stage between egg and adult.

Some insects (like many retired Canadians) prefer to take a vacation from winter. Monarch butterflies migrate south in large numbers in the fall. Some even travel 1800 miles (2700 km) from Canada to Mexico to escape winter's chill.

Revised from Web Site for Oak Hammock Conservation Area at www.ducks.ca/ohmic/english/feature/bugs.html (accessed March 6, 2003)

Lesson K
Insect Post-Reading Exercise

Check true or false beside each of the following statements. Some of the answers are in the previous text and some are not. If you can find the answers in the text, please place a large star beside the number.

1. Like other mammals, insects are warm-blooded.
   TRUE _____ FALSE _____
2. Many older Canadians like to take a vacation from winter.
   TRUE _____ FALSE _____
3. Some butterflies fly over 2500 kilometres to their winter homes.
   TRUE _____ FALSE _____
4. Bees plan ahead for the long, cold winters.
   TRUE _____ FALSE _____
5. Fly eggs hatch in late spring.
   TRUE _____ FALSE _____
6. Full-grown dragonflies survive the winter underwater.
   TRUE _____ FALSE _____
7. The majority of adult insects die when the temperature hits 0.
   TRUE _____ FALSE _____
8. Beehives are dominated by a "Queen" bee.
   TRUE _____ FALSE _____
9. Insects, such as mosquitoes, can pass diseases to humans.
   TRUE _____ FALSE _____
10. Beetles have the same winter pattern as wasps.
    TRUE _____ FALSE _____

Lesson H
Using Language Skills: You and the Math World

You have 2 tasks to perform with a partner:

- Ask your partner questions 1 to 7.
- Then have your partner ask you questions 8 to 11.

1. When, where and why did you last study math?
2. What kind of math did you like and why?
3. In general, were your math teachers nice?
4. Did you use a calculator in high school math classes?
5. Are your math skills better or worse than the average person's?
6. Do you think English teachers need to have good math skills?
7. What is the difference between multiplication and division?
8. Have you memorized the times tables up to 12?
9. Can you tell me three professions that require superb math skills?

10. At what age do kids learn to count to 10?

11. Name three situations in which you use your math skills.

Lesson I
Part Eight: Pre-Viewing Exercise

It's a good idea to think a bit about what you are going to read before you start. Read each question and glance at the next page just long enough to answer it. Jot down a point-form answer.

Lesson L
Math Reading Exercise

Read the text. Circle any words that you want to practise pronouncing or talk about after.

Achieving Excellence in Math

A study conducted by Dr. Jamie Campbell (a psychologist at the University of Saskatchewan) tested the basic math skills of 72 university students in three groups: students educated in China, Canadian students of Chinese origin and non-Asian Canadian students.

In the first part of the study, the students were asked to do basic arithmetic in their head: e.g. 14 divided by 2, 3 times 7, and 8 plus 9. The non-Asians were about 25% slower than the Asians. The reason? The Asians had the answers memorized. On average, the two Asian groups used their memory to recall the answer 85% of the time, compared to 70% for the non-Asians. For example, for the question "What is 6 + 7?" some Canadians used the strategy that 6 + 6 = 12, plus 1 is 13, rather than just remember that 6 + 7 = 13.

The next part of the study included multi-step questions such as 3 + 12 + 13. In this part, the students educated in China had 58% more correct answers than the non-Asian students, while Canadian students of Asian origin had 19% more correct answers than their non-Asian Canadian counterparts.

At the end of the day, Dr. Campbell's study found that the Asian students did better on math tests because they could use their memories. These students had not used calculators in their elementary or secondary school education before coming to university in Canada (unlike their Canadian counterparts) and their teachers had expected them to memorize answers.

The study indicates that students who are firmly grounded in the basics can free up their mind to concentrate on the more difficult aspects of a problem. The more time a student has to spend on calculating basic math, the less time there is to devote to more complicated matters. This is particularly important in writing tests where students are always pressed for time. Canadian schools should consider removing calculators (especially from Grades 1-5) and insisting on the memorization of basic math answers.

Revised from Web Site for Math Whizz at http://www.mathwizz.com/papers/parentreport.htm (accessed April 1, 2003)

Reading Lesson 1: I,
Part Eight: Tree Reading Exercise

Read the text. Circle any words that you want to practise pronouncing or talk about after.

What is a Tree?

Trees are the largest living creatures and have been in existence for over 400 million years. The world's *tallest* tree measures over 370 feet (112.78 metres) from base to crown – the height of a 37-story building! Generally, however, trees are four to six metres tall with a thick, woody stem, called the trunk.

Like all plants, a tree begins from a seed. A seed must have food, water and light to grow. Once the seed sprouts, it grows into a seedling that grows into a sapling and eventually saplings grow into trees that produce their own seeds.

All trees have roots which anchor the tree to the ground (so that it can stand upright), and absorb water, minerals and nutrients from the soil. The trunk of a tree, which is protected by a tough outer covering of bark, connects the roots to the branches and transports water and minerals from the soil to the rest of the tree.

Branches connect the trunk to the leaves and transport water and minerals to the leaves. The leaves, which are held up by branches, are arranged in a way that captures maximum sunlight.

The tips of branches are known as twigs and these are the growing ends of the tree. Leaves grow on the twigs and produce food for the whole tree, but can only do this in sunlight. Leaves use energy from the sun to convert carbon dioxide in the air and water from the soil into sugars to feed the tree. This process is known as photosynthesis. Trees release oxygen into the air during photosynthesis. This is very important, as all animals – including us humans – need oxygen to survive.

Every day we use and often eat something that has come from a tree. The uses of trees are almost endless. Trees are historical symbols with great ecological and economic significance. They are an incredibly important natural, renewable resource that must never be taken for granted.

Revised from Web Site for Ecology at http://www.ecokids.ca/pub/eco_info/topics/forests (accessed April 1, 2003)

Reading Lesson 1: 1, Part Eight: Text Reading Exercise

Read the text. Circle any words that you want to practise pronouncing or talk about after.

The Meaning of Giving Flowers

As every flower lover knows, flowers have a language of their own. Every sentiment is expressed in one form or another by these fragile blooms. Of course, even the experts disagree on the "true meaning" of many flowers and most have different meanings for different people. So, while all flowers convey thoughtfulness and love, here are some of the traditional meanings for flowers in North America.

CACTUS	Endurance
CARNATION (PINK)	I'll Never Forget You
CARNATION (RED)	My Heart Aches For You, Deep Admiration
CARNATION (WHITE)	Sweet and Lovely, Innocence, Pure Love, Woman's Good Luck Gift
CARNATION (YELLOW)	You Have Disappointed Me, Rejection
DAFFODIL	Regard, Unrequited Love, You're the Only One, The Sun is Always Shining when I'm with You
DAISY	Innocence, Loyal Love, Purity
IVY	Wedded Love, Fidelity, Friendship, Affection
LILY OF THE VALLEY	Sweetness, Tears of the Virgin Mary, Return to Happiness, Humility, You've Made My Life Complete
ORCHID	Love, Beauty, Refinement, Beautiful Lady, Chinese Symbol for Many Children
ROSE (DARK CRIMSON)	Mourning
ROSE (PINK)	Perfect Happiness, Please Believe Me
ROSE (RED)	Love, I Love You
ROSE (WHITE)	Innocence and Purity or Secrecy and Silence
ROSE (YELLOW)	Jealousy
ROSES (Bouquet of Blooms)	Heartfelt Gratitude
TULIP (YELLOW)	You Are Sunshine for My Heart

http://www.800florals.com/care/meaning

More Writing Out Loud Workshop

Linda Dawn Pettigrew

Writing Out Loud (WOL) is a free writing program, originally developed by Deborah Morgan for literacy learners to improve reading and writing skills in their first language, English. WOL means you write with a group for short, set periods of time on an arranged topic, without attention to grammar, spelling or punctuation – none of which is corrected during this process. Writers then read to the group, if they care to share their writing.

WOL is a strategy that builds self-esteem, which in turn, builds confidence. This is its purpose and its strength. A confident person is able to write authentically and effectively. Simply put, WOL gets you going. WOL works for anyone.

WOL activities are user-friendly. That means they are easy to prepare and fun to do. I think that WOL teaches people how to be writers, rather than how to write. WOL has motivated hundreds, who have gained the confidence to develop their 'voices' and express their opinions on paper.

Warm-ups: Writing time – 2 min. Reading and Feedback time – 10 min. Choose a warm-up activity that gets the learners focused in a positive manner. At this time, I ask that participants put away everything except their kits, pencils and paper – off the desk. No dictionaries allowed! After, elicit one reader from each table if the group is large and time short; make sure to tell them everyone will have a chance to read at least once if s/he cares to.

Sample Starter

Participants draw a card with a noun followed by a descriptive sentence. My new word is, Enlightening. The card says: Friends can help you see things in a new way. Write two minutes about yours. My card has got me thinking about how I can work smarter, not harder.

Let it Rip: Fearless, Free Writing

What Does Fearless Free Writing Mean to Me?

First, it means just put your pencil to the paper (pedal to the metal) and keep going! Don't stop as long as the ideas are coming. In other words, let 'er rip... Second, it means don't worry about grammar, punctuation or spelling. Worry about putting your real thoughts on paper and write from the heart. Don't worry about big or fancy words; just write what you feel, what comes out. Write for short periods of time – five to ten minutes seems to be about right. The last thing I would say is to write about what the topic brings to mind. In sum, I love free writing in a small group. It really clears my mind and makes me feel calm. There's nothing like the sound of pencils on paper to make me feel at peace with the world.

(p. 36, More Writing Out Loud – Free writing)

How to Write Fearlessly

"When I first started this program (Writing Out Loud) it was very hard to get my thoughts down on paper. For me to write like I do it is very hard. Now I have the willpower to write what I want to even if it doesn't make sense to me. I started the writing out loud program with no idea what I was doing. I was very scared at first but I think I've learned how to cope with it. I just start writing when I feel that little tinge of fear it seems to help some how. i'm so confident in my writing that I'm gonna help run a workshop on fearless free writing with Linda Dawn. i'm hoping by this time next year that I have some of my stuff published for everyone to read."*

(p.41, More Writing Out Loud – Free writing)

* Shirly has been published four times since she wrote this in the spring of 2001!

All Writing is Good Writing: Some Fearless, Free Writing Guidelines

1. Respect the privacy of everyone in the group.
2. Feel free to "pass" if you are not comfortable with a certain exercise.
3. All writing today is good writing. The idea is to put words on paper. Don't worry about spelling or grammar or how your writing looks.
4. Take care of yourself. Take "time out" if you need to. You are safe here.

5. Take time to listen as well as time to speak. Everyone needs a chance to be heard.
6. Give yourself permission to relax and have fun.

Tip: Remind learners with another specific **listening strategy** before discussing Fearless Free Writing guidelines. Discuss **listening** (reading) attentively **for the whole message before formulating your own thoughts**, what you would like to say or write next. Then, brainstorm why #5 guideline is an important listening strategy.

What Instructors Say About Their Fearless, Free Writing Experiences

Catherine Mochrie, Program Manager at the Adult Learning Centre in Red Lake wrote a poem about free writing when we started the first WOL online training. Her learners write poetry and hold very successful "coffee houses" to showcase their writing and other creative work. Her idea, Colour it _____? kicks off the activities in the section, Writing What You Know in More Writing Out Loud, pp. 55 -58. This is a great lead-in to poetry writing because it follows a set pattern, yet allows for individuality. It's fun to ascribe a colour to a feeling; one learner wrote:

> Happiness is yellow.
>
> It feels like a soft baby blanket.
>
> It smells like fresh flowers.
>
> It tastes like fresh home made pie.

Linda Dawn Pettigrew: Besides each instructor having her/his forte, it will depend on your particular learners what kind of writing activities work best for you. A personal favourite is letter writing, an idea I've adapted from "Don't Sweat The Small Stuff." This activity, "Letter of Thanks," is found on pages 135 to 138 in the section, "Dealing with Emotion in More Writing Out Loud." I also love using the themes in Oprah magazine – see Ode to Oprah, pp.108 -110, Acknowledging Emotions – More Writing Out Loud.

Tip: Effective writers develop clarity, a writing skill, by always deciding on the audience (**who**) and the purpose (**why**) before they begin to write. I teach or review this strategy **before** every writing activity and before I describe the task.

To date, WOL has attracted more women than men. Nonetheless, men who try it, for example, **Dale Jacobs**, a University of Windsor professor, really love it. His idea is published in an activity developed by Deborah Morgan, If the Shoe Fits, pp. 76-81, More Writing Out Loud - Writing What You Know. Variations on this exercise have been an extremely successful part of my last eight workshops, including the two last November at TESL Ontario and one at TESL North York/York Region in February 2002.

I teach the LINC 3 theme, Commercial Services, with the topic, Shopping for Clothing. Learners love wrapping up with Specialty Shopping by writing dialogues and acting them out in role plays that had them trying on and buying shoes. (Bring a bag full.) Let's see how you like my version, Shoes, Shoes and More Shoes, right now...

Words of Our Own

Writing was my voice
I was scared
I felt
nobody would believe
me
I felt alone
I was afraid of making mistakes
Would I be accepted?
Writing is healing.
Praise, practice, writing in a group
helped me get over
my fears
it helped me
to laugh
it is important
to learn
you are never
too old.
Writing about what you know
write
from
the
heart.

Written by Catherine Mochrie, WOL instructor

Shoes, Shoes and More Shoes Unedited research samples

1. Literacy Learner, Literacy for EAST Toronto (LET)

   I have six shoes in my clousit. I like my sandles. the best. they are comtelble. my running shoes

are old but they are ripe I had them for every. I bought a black pare of shoes I don't were them. I were my running shoes all the time.

2. Literacy Writer, Writing Out Loud Research Project

   My closet is not that big, and it is to small to hold all the stuff I have in it. I have fourteen pairs of shoes and they all black. i like buying black shoes because I think it matches with any colour of cloths. I wear a size 81/2 shoe or sometime 9. it depend on the make of the shoe. At time it can be hard to fine the right shoe that you want, and at times it can be very easy. For me I love shopping specially were shoes is consern. I think it is important for everyone to wear shoes if you can afford it. Because shoes is one of the most important part in our every day dressing.

3. Literacy Tutor, Parliament St. Library Workshop, Spring 2002

   I like listening to stories about shoes written by woman at writing out loud. The stories they tell about why they like shoes take the mystery of shoes. To a man Imelda Marcos with all her shoes seemed like a rich & crazy woman. With all that money why spend it on shoes. Men laugh at the But craziness of it.

   Woman laugh too. But not at the craziness of it. They seem to laugh because they understand what exactly is going on.

   When I listen to women reading their stories about shoes I start to think I am beginning to understand. I am beginning to think men ar missing out. Could you see a man with 10,000 pair of shoes. Probably not. But if more men listen to woman telling their stories about shoes that might change Men might go out & buy more shoes.

   Soon we might catch up to women. Oprah might do a show on it.

   Men are from Mars and woman are from Venus

   Until men started buying shoes.

   Wo We might all end up being from the same planet after all.

4. Tutor, Community Literacy Program

   I love the thought of what Steve Martin called the Cruel Shoes in one of his routines from many years ago. The words make an image appear before me, of painfully exquisite soft leather pumps, perhaps w/an ankle strap, def.w/ sky scraper heels, the kind of shoes that you feel betutiful, like a princess, but only when you're sitting down.They would be in a lovely not-at-all practical colour. But it wouldn't matter because you would only wear them indoors, and almost always when you're sitting or lying down. The feeling of being pampered & yet punished.

5. Literacy Writer, Toronto Fall 2002

   Shoes Too

   Shoes were made to wear.
   But at times they can be a
   Pain, you know where!
   Shoes can be beautiful, there are
   shoes for teenagers, and others
   For cross trainers.

   There are others that cannot
   be beat! they are for tapping our
   Feet.

   There are some for swimming, while
   others are for swaying or dancing.
   Shoes for toddlers, other for joggers.
   At times they can give pleasure
   or pain.

   Some are for beauty, others for duty.
   Others to show off our shape, while
   others help us control our weight.
   Some are slingbacks, others fasttracks.
   Others for running, and some are quite
   Stunning!

   There are shoes to enhance our feet, and
   others to disguise our feet.
   Some for boxing, others for wading.
   There are some for climbing, others for mining.
   There are some for the petite feet, others just
   Do not like our feet.
   Some for tippy toes, others are made of board.
   The most popular of them all are
   the runners, they fit in everyday life style.

   So stock up, replenish, renew, shoes are old
   yet new.
   What the future holds is yet to come,
   Shoes are on the run.

Instructions

Describe your shoes – past and/or present, those you liked and those you didn't, and say why.

Practise fearless, free writing for the next ten minutes. Have fun.

Practise Writing Skills with Writing Out Loud

Here are a few ways to improve writing skills with today's WOL activities. Match learner skill-sets with Stage or Benchmark descriptors accordingly.

Pick a card, any card

Enlightening is the word on my card that is described with the sentence, "Friends can help you to see things in a new way." Learners can practise writing grammatical sentences that explain the meaning of their word (word order, capitals and periods). They could make up their own cards for kids, classmates, mothers, fathers, bosses and so forth (as the person who made these has done).

Shoes, Shoes and More Shoes

Basic writers brainstorm footwear by pointing to theirs and/or using pictures. They copy or write the vocabulary and errors such as pare/pair, were/wear, made in the first Shoes sample. You could review colours and numbers.

Develop description early. Even high beginners/ low intermediate learners say why and use 'because' to write about their shoes. Giving reasons helps make writing more interesting for readers. Importantly, it helps them discover and express their opinions.

ESL writers often mention different footwear for different seasons, so work that seasonal aspect into the writing task too. It's a good opportunity to deal with their fears about weather. And shoes bring out cultural issues, e.g., status and class. Review tenses – simple present in the past, and simple past vs. present perfect.

More advanced writers can express likes and dislikes, ranking their reasons. Practise punctuation, spelling, word order, paragraph form and the many idioms about shoes – if the shoe fits, wear it.

Bata Shoe Museum is free the first Tuesday of every month. An easily adaptable *Teacher's Resource Kit for ESL* is geared to high intermediate learners. Tel. 416 – 979 7799 ext. 226. www.batashoemuseum.ca.

* Fortune Cookies

Participants break open their fortune cookies and read the text on the "fortune." Allow ample time to help interpret the generally idiomatic texts. Small groups paraphrase predictions. Then they write them on the board. The class can revise the grammar, spelling and punctuation together. Learners can find all the adjectives, deciding on three new ones they would like to learn. Then they draw names and write a fortune for a classmate, using the three new adjectives. Fortune cookies make great bingo prizes. You can always practise "will/be going to." I hope you have as much fun as I do – Writing Out Loud.

Linda Dawn Pettigrew is a literacy practitioner and LINC/ESL instructor. Her interest is in helping others develop their writing skills meaningfully. "Writing Out Loud" has been adapted for TESL.

Exploring the Terrain of Interculture: *A Qualitative Study of an ESL Classroom*

Xuemei Li & Anita Girvan

Approaches to English language teaching are topologically rich and varied. L2 learners acquire not only a new linguistic system but also a new cultural system that may be distinctly different from their own. Teachers play a pivotal role in preparing learners in this process.

This research paper represents a short journey among the participants of a specific ESL classroom in a Canadian university. In the first section, the treatment of culture within literature is discussed. Then we will observe the stories and beliefs of participants and how they shape this process. Finally, the stories are discussed in terms of the contribution they make to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). While this study describes just one specific classroom environment, the themes that emerge help to raise awareness and sensitivity to issues of culture in the language-learning process.

1. Literature Review

The treatment of *culture* in TESL literature is varied. Historically, discussions of cross-cultural influences on language learning began with the work of American linguists in the 1940s and 1950s. The work of Charles Fries (1945), Robert Lado (1961), and others was clearly a major catalyst for subsequent research (Odlin, 1989). Lado's *Linguistics Across Cultures* was a pivotal work in the area of contrastive linguistics and cross-cultural language studies. He stated that learning a second language constitutes a very different task from learning the first language and that the basic problems arise primarily out of the special 'set' created by the first language habits. It seems that two streams of thought have surfaced from these seminal works in cross-cultural language study. The first strongly focuses on the contrastive, cultural elements of language, emphasizing monolithic *ways of knowing* within national or linguistic groupings. The second highlights the variables involved in the notion of *culture*, and suggests that the process of language learning implies the creation of new individual and cultural identities.

1.1 Contrastive approaches to cultural difference

Within the first difference-centred approach, researchers in the field of language transfer have found that the distance between the native and the target language contributes significantly to the degree of transfer. (Ellis, 1994; Lado, 1961; Odlin, 1989). The differences between the language and culture across national and ethnic groupings is attributed to historical, philosophical, and social elements that are particular to that group. "Language is the symbolic representation of a people, and it comprises their historical and cultural backgrounds as well as their approach to life and their ways of living and thinking" (Deng & Liu, 1995, p.3).

As far as language learning and thought patterns are concerned, Robert Kaplan first suggested in his 1966 extensive work in contrastive rhetoric that there are specific *cultural thought patterns* inherent to specific cultures. He did so by using a form of comparative analysis of students' written materials for specific purposes (Kaplan, 1987). Kaplan's often-cited, controversial research describes the differences between *occidental* linear ways of thinking and *oriental*, indirect approaches – represented by a spiral schema. Similarly, Scollon (1999) explores the cultural assumptions about teaching and learning between *Socratic* methods and *Confucian* methods, finding sharp contrasts between the two educational ideologies in terms of the goals, philosophical assumptions, use of language in communication and roles of teacher and students. Nisbett et al. (2001) also indicate that those who grow up in Asian and American cultures think in different ways. A further study exploring Western versus Eastern modes of expression was carried out by Hinkel (1994). By juxtaposing the writing patterns of Chinese ESL learners with the patterns of Americans, she attributes the differences to different discourse traditions. In the case of American patterns, the *Aristotelian* explicit approach was valued, whereas

in the Chinese case, the more subtle, *Confucian*-influenced, harmonious approach was valued.

Other studies, such as Olshtain (1983) and Richards and Sukwiwat (1983) focus on specific conversational conventions that vary in different cultures. Different cultural perceptions of concepts such as verbal repertoires, power paradigms, politeness, and self-presentation result in frustrations for language learners in cross-cultural communication settings (Richard & Sukwiwat, 1983). Olshtain's study focuses on the act of *apology* in American, Hebrew, and Russian linguistic groups. The research shows that people apologize in different ways and for different reasons based on their cultural background.

1.2 Cultural fluidity and the creation of new identities

Recently, another body of literature concerned with language learning and culture has focused not so much on *differences* and dichotomous notions of culture, but rather on fluid notions of language and culture (Edge, 1996; Holliday, 1994; Ilieva, 2001; Kramsch, 1993; 1999; Shen, 1989; Warschauer, 2000). Some have reconceptualized language learning as a "confrontation" of cultures (Kramsch, 1993), or similarly as a "process of transformation of personal identity and cultural loyalty" (Lemke, 1998), or "becoming another person" (Swiderski, 1993). The notion of *culture*, itself, within this literature refers to elements more complex than the traditional monolithic *Culture* as defined by national, ethnic, or linguistic borders. Age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, profession, religion, lifestyle, as well as many other factors, may exert strong influences on links and divisions in fluid cultural contexts (Holliday, 1994). Frameworks for the treatment of cultural content or methodology must be equally open and fluid. Instead of presenting dichotomous notions in English language teaching such as "target" versus "local" cultures, Kramsch (1993) suggests that participants can look for a "third place" in the foreign language classroom. This metaphor allows for the acknowledgement of the rich potential in ESL classrooms.

This kind of ideological stance accurately depicts the socially situated reality of the individual learners' experience of learning a new language where the landscape and rules of participation are not immediately accessible. Hanvey (1979, in Loveday, 1982) describes the "4 stages of cross-cultural sensitivity" which can be applied to the process of language learning. Loveday, Kramsch, and others suggest that the process begin with relativizing one's own culture/language vis à vis the new culture/language. Initially there may be value judgements involved in this process, and the new culture may be seen as strange; ultimately, however, the ideal "sphere of interculturality" (Kramsch, 1993) or cultural "transspection" (Hanvey, 1979 in Loveday, 1982, p. 52) may be achieved. At this stage, an individual has the ability to appreciate and understand a new culture as a participant, and to value the *ways of knowing* in both cultures. As Cook (1992) suggests: "the L2 learner is not becoming an imitation native speaker, but a person who can stand between the two languages, using both when appropriate, [and standing]...between two cultures seeing, both...in a new light" (pp. 583-4). Moreover, the learner herself/himself has shaped a new identity in this evolutionary process and has helped to shape a dynamic *third place* in the language classroom.

What does this re-conceptualization of the language-learning process mean for English language teaching? As Byram (1989) suggests, teachers must think of the notion of culture in the classroom in "more than haphazard and intuitive ways". Rather than transferring cultural information between target cultures and local cultures, a new approach would aim at reflecting on both by understanding relational ways of meaning. After considerable reflection, a new space, which is more than a mere sum of its parts, can be jointly created by all participants in the classroom. In her more recent work, Kramsch (1999) describes a "pedagogy of interpretive practice" (p.1) which values elasticity in frameworks for co-negotiating meaning. Kramsch challenges the boundaries of foreign language study by foregrounding *context* and *culture* in meaning. She draws upon the linguistic fields of *critical discourse analysis* and *semiotics* to formulate seven "postulates of a rhetorical approach to text interpretation" (p.2). She demonstrates this theory in action by providing an actual classroom exercise in which twenty-six ESL learners are given the same short story and are asked to summarize it. Although the students read the same story, their summaries focus on and describe different aspects of the story, using different lexical and syntactic devices and including different information. Students are given the opportunity to comment on each other's texts in a productive,

non-judgmental way. The comments reveal honest and interested attempts to reflect on various representations and productions of meaning in a *sphere of interculturality*. Kramsch's framework for analysis contributes not only epistemologically profound theory, but also valuable potential for real classroom-based exercises for instructors.

The kind of pedagogy suggested in the previously mentioned literature provides a viable and profound paradigm for those working in the ESL/EFL Field. The excitement lies in the potential to create an environment which reflects not only the local culture, and that of the individual students, but another newly-shaped classroom culture where the teacher and students develop metacognition in the co-production of meaning.

2. The Study

It is evident that each of these two ways of regarding culture in the ESL/EFL classroom represents a different ideological stance toward language, culture learning and teaching. Each may have its own strengths and weaknesses according to the locale in which it is applied. The observations and interviews conducted for this research started with the above-mentioned literature as a *point de départ*. We then sought to extend questions raised in the literature by exploring the creation of a specific classroom interculture and to investigate the impact of the participants' cultural backgrounds in the making of this interculture.

2.1 Participants and context

The class we observed was an ESL non-credit course at a Canadian university. Students had enrolled in this course either on a six-week or 12-week basis. While a few students intended to stay in Canada for only a short time, the majority wished to continue studies in undergraduate programs. Most students were about 20 years old, had recently arrived in Canada, and had begun to study English within four months.

There were 11 students in the class, including four Korean, three Chinese, one Japanese, one Russian, one Brazilian and one francophone of African heritage. The teacher was a Canadian native speaker with about 25 years of ESL teaching experience. During our observations, four Asian students – three Chinese, John, Philip and Jessica, and one Korean, Mary – volunteered to be interviewed. They were approximately the same age (18-24). The teacher, Grace, was also happy to offer her insights into the creation of her classroom interculture. Pseudonyms were used for all participants in this study.

2.2 Data Collection

The data collection for this study was based on five classroom observations over a six-week period, two group interviews within the classroom, and subsequent individual interviews with the four students and the teacher. The group interviews were conducted in the fourth observation as one of the classroom activities. Field notes were taken for the classroom observations and the group interviews. In the group interviews, we obtained information that seemed buried underneath the apparent dynamics of the classroom interculture. In order to get precise data, we conducted follow-up interviews after the observations. These individual interviews with the four students and the teacher were tape-recorded and transcribed.

Realizing that observations only revealed the reality of the classroom interculture at the superficial level, that we might get more in-depth data through individual interviews, we prepared some questions as guidelines for asking the students. They included asking about their learning histories, the cultures they thought they represented, their understanding of the relationship between native and second culture, and their strategies in communicating with peers and the teacher, who were from divergent cultures. However, the interviews were not restricted to these topics. The participants were allowed to articulate relevant personal information, resulting in interviews that were semi-structured. The differences in participants' verbalization also revealed the classroom's intercultural complexity.

To enhance the credibility of the interpretation of the themes noted in the data, aspects of triangulation and member checking were taken into consideration (Etmer, 1997) during the process of data collection. We also used multiple methods in collecting the data, such as taking field notes and transcribing interviews. For example, we drew data from such multiple sources as field observations and interviews with the students and with the teacher. The notes and transcripts were cross-checked by the two researchers to minimize misinterpretation.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis of this study started with broad descriptions of what we noticed in classroom observations and transcripts of the taped interviews. Then we tried to code the data in order to facilitate discovery and further investigation (Seidel, 1998). The next step involved the disassembling, sorting and sifting of the data, using the interpretational approach (Ertmer, 1997) to identify salient themes which were categorized by highlighting similarities (Maxwell & Miller, 1992) of the instances articulated by the teacher and the students concerning their views about culture in learning and the classroom interculture. Some of these themes appeared evident during the process of earlier data analysis; some surfaced at the end of the study when we put all the data together for cross checking.

2.4 Findings

Researchers as mediators of interculture

While most research fails to highlight the position of the researcher(s) as integral to the study, we believe that such neglect often leads to an inaccurate assumption of "objectivity" on the part of the reader. Moreover, in this particular study of classroom *interculture*, and the impact of cultural background on interculture, our own varied backgrounds provide an interesting metastudy in the process of the negotiation of a *sphere of interculturality* for the purpose of research. While we share many experiences as English language teachers and colleagues, there are several cultural differences that colour our respective points of view. Such differences have enriched this study and provided "triangulated" perspectives to the data. For these reasons, we will briefly foreground our own cultural influences that impacted our approach to this research.

One of the researchers involved in this study has been a teacher of English as a Foreign Language who taught in China for 10 years. She had lived and studied in England for one year, and she has been studying and working in Canada since 2001. She was raised to appreciate the virtues of the philosophy and morals of traditional China; however, she has open-mindedly embraced her studies and travels in the English-speaking world and enjoys learning about other cultures.

The other researcher in this study is a Canadian-born, visible minority (with Jamaican-Canadian and British-Canadian parents) who has taught both within diverse Canadian settings, and English as a Foreign Language during a three-year period in Japan. Her cultural affiliation is a complex mix reflecting her family background and a period of immersion in Asia and Europe.

While we both thought that we were entering the classroom observation stage with broad questions and no assumptions, our individual reactions to the initial observations immediately revealed assumptions and beliefs that we each held as a result of our own cultural experiences and formation. The Chinese researcher was immediately shocked by the outgoing classroom behaviour of the Asian students. In particular, the three Chinese students participated in a way that was not representative of traditional Chinese classroom conduct. The discourse of those she interviewed more closely matched her expectations. While the initial observation of the dynamic cross-cultural interaction in the classroom did not surprise the Canadian researcher, who has experienced such environments before, the interviews presented some information that did not fit with her expectations and beliefs. Although she did not think that monolithic definitions of culture appropriately described the reality in the classroom, participants' discourse reflected such dichotomies as "Western" versus "Asian." As a result of our different perceptions regarding classroom interculture, this partnership allowed us to value the many different ways in which participants choose to describe their notions of *culture*.

General classroom observations: dynamics of the interculture

During our first class visit, and the three that followed, we observed that the 11 students and the teacher had a kind of classroom culture that encouraged and valued diversity. For example, students always attempted to choose group members who differed from them in personality or nationality; moreover, the classroom interaction was dynamic and non-stereotypical.

All activities that we witnessed had a component of "teamwork", but each time the teams were formed, the groups varied. The teacher seemed to be making a concerted effort to expose learners to the process of building teams and wanted learners to be conscious of their individual values in choosing teammates. These included such personality and behavioural traits as "flexible", "strong in their opinion", "leader", "follower", or cultural identity.

The classroom interaction was flexible – students answered each other's questions rather than deferring to the teacher as the "authority" – a feature of most Asian classrooms (The majority of students – 8 of 11, were from East Asian countries.). A couple of students were a little more timid in contributing to the conversation, but, for the most part, it seemed that everyone took turns without having to be called upon by the teacher.

Group interviews with the students: quandaries in the interculture

The classroom observations demonstrated a cooperative and flexible classroom interculture. However, through the group interviews in the fourth observation session, some students told us they struggled to "get rid of" their native cultural influence. They described the quandaries they had to face: whether they should keep their own national characteristics or melt into the new target culture, and identifying the appropriate balance between the two. These face-to-face talks with students suggested that there was something much more complicated happening beneath the surface of the dynamic classroom interaction. In order to understand these students better and to probe in depth this classroom's interculture, we interviewed four learners and their teacher after the classroom observations.

Individual interviews with the students: complexity of the interculture

The three Chinese students – John, Philip and Jessica – have some characteristics in common. They are all from big cities in China and started to learn English in junior high school. However, their stories reveal both similarities and differences in their views about cultural identity and language learning.

John appears comfortable in the new learning environment in Canada. Feeling open to other cultures here, he never thinks about the psychological distance between other students and him. It makes no difference whether he talks to a fellow Chinese student or to other international students. But he does admit that he tries to avoid some sensitive topics such as those on controversial historical or political issues. John sees himself as a mix of different cultures, and accepts most students in his class. His grandparents and parents have all gone through unusual hardships. He says that his family has influenced him in some way, but he thinks the personal experience of individuals is more important than family background. He believes that while there are differences among students from different places, he doesn't find it more difficult to communicate with them. He feels it is easier to communicate with students from "the Western world". Asian cultures are "too same", so he would rather have more contact with people from diverse cultures.

Philip holds a very negative attitude toward his high school English education, where the teaching method was the "old style," and the teacher was a "teaching machine," focusing mainly on grammar and vocabulary. While he is as positive as John is towards cross-cultural communication, Philip feels it is more difficult to talk to other international students about unfamiliar fields. Philip thinks that he represents "typical" Chinese culture. He considers polite manners in the classroom to be highly appreciated in both Oriental and Occidental cultures; students should be considerate to the teacher and should not interrupt until the teacher finishes speaking. Sometimes he tries to put on the teacher's hat to understand the teacher's position and attitudes. For him, "saving face" is a critical determiner as to whether to ask questions in class. As an example of being very *Chinese*, he mentions his passion for revolutionary songs instead of popular music. His patriotism can be seen in his determination to go back to China after his degree program in Canada and to devote himself to the "stability and prosperity" of his motherland. This is rare discourse among his generation. Philip's family background has molded his temperament and ideology. He understands the older generations in the family, and is "deeply impressed" by their stories. He thinks that talking with other international students is different from talking with his Chinese peers. The biggest barrier is language. However, he never hesitates to approach a person with whom he would like to speak. Nationality doesn't matter to him. He prefers to talk to different people on different occasions, but he also enjoys talking to the same person at length because of the opportunity for increased in mutual understanding between them.

Our next participant, Jessica likes challenges. She says life is harder here, but "the more difficult the situation, the more experience you get". As for communication with international classmates, Jessica considers it easier to talk to Asian students, because they speak slower than students from

Russia and Cuba, and their accents are easier to understand. "The other problem is educational background," she says. People from different cultures usually focus on different topics, and it becomes a barrier in communication. However, despite the difficulties, she still prefers to talk to them for the purpose of learning more about other cultures. Jessica enjoys the classroom atmosphere here. She likes the freedom to ask questions, and appreciates her teachers' attitudes toward teaching. Jessica says that she owes much to her mother who always comforted and encouraged her whenever she "felt down". To Jessica, family influence is much greater than her limited personal experience. Jessica thinks that she represents a "mixed up" culture as a result of her easy access to cultures other than her own. In Canada, she tries to avail herself of every opportunity to practise English with her landlord, teachers and classmates, yet she is careful when speaking to people from unfamiliar cultures. She tries to "respect their religion and politics" and avoids talking about these subjects.

In addition to the three Chinese students, Mary, a Korean subject, was also interviewed. Her English learning includes the mandatory public high school courses in Korea as well as courses taken after secondary school at private institutions. Mary has always felt some ambiguity around her cultural identity. She claims, "I'm on the bridge...I felt I'm an outsider in Korea." She talks about the silence in traditional Korean classrooms and how she felt ostracized by classmates when she spoke out in class. In describing the difference between Eastern and Western ideas reflecting classroom behaviour of students, she quotes a Korean friend who says, "Western people think with their mouths." Having come to Canada to study English, she feels frustrated that the largest group in her ESL class is Korean (four out of 11 students), and that most of the students are Asian. Mary also feels that she is an outsider in a Korean-dominated class. Whenever group work is involved, she attempts to work with classmates from "Western" cultures. Openness is a big part of Mary's personal philosophy. She wants to learn about many cultures and is ready to participate in activities with international students on campus. For the most part, she believes that "Korean people don't like someone who is different from our group". Mary indicates that the place she has felt the most comfortable is Europe – "They're more liberal, more open-minded". She has said that one day she may marry a "foreign person" – an idea that is very shocking to her mother as well as to most Koreans. She would like to "escape" from Korea one day.

Interviews with the teacher: diversity of the interculture

The interviews with students show us only one side of the coin. To get the whole picture of the multi-faceted classroom interculture, we also interviewed the teacher who offered us significant insights into this sphere of her class. The teacher, Grace, has had 25 years of experience teaching ESL. Her own attitudes surrounding "culture" reflect the various influences in her life. She said that she belongs to "a larger culture, a shared culture that doesn't really have a unique identity...the culture of the 'globally aware'." During the course of her life thus far, Grace has learned many languages and travelled extensively in Europe. She characterizes herself as "linguistically sensitive". Empathy with her students is very important to her. When asked if her language learning and intercultural experiences have shaped her as a teacher she says: "It certainly has been a bonus knowing what it's like to be what might be termed a 'minority' – someone who has to struggle to be accepted". She admits that it is difficult to articulate how she, as a teacher, facilitates the development of "intercultural competence" in her students, although many of the classroom activities focus on team building and group work. She believes that such activities allow students to be "analytical, experimental and reflective" in communication:

When asked if this particular group of students and their group dynamics are typical of classes she has experienced in the past, Grace steers clear of generalizations. She avoids describing nationally, or linguistically defined cultural characteristics when possible. She observes that students tended to work with someone who is from a different culture than their own, and, in this particular group, students worked with different partners on each of the many occasions that they were required to choose teammates. She believes that age, socio-economic background and other factors may be more important determiners of group dynamics than the nationality or ethnicity of the participants. When asked why, in her opinion, the three Chinese students in this classroom do not display traditional Chinese classroom behaviour and if this is a trend, Grace responds:

> I believe this is a pure coincidence that we have three outgoing, dynamic Chinese students...

> they're risk-takers. ... I don't think it's a trend yet. I found them immediately cooperative. I really do believe that that's their personality, that the classroom didn't transform them. The classroom may have allowed them to liberate themselves.

In reflecting upon her perceptions of the Korean learner involved in this study, Grace says:

> Students, especially the two Korean women, are so compelled to do what is 'right', and Mary was not like them. She understood that I wanted them to be autonomous individuals working together....I think maybe she wanted to avoid the Koreans who acted like 'Koreans'. She finds comfort here...and readily demonstrates the 'interculturality' you're looking for. Other students are still stuck.

In discussing this notion of "interculturality" with Grace, we asked about ESL students in general and how willing they initially are to participate in cultural exchanges in the classroom. She explained that students really want to learn "Canadian culture" and they are disappointed when they arrive in a classroom of other non-Canadians. Grace feels that the teachers, the program and the philosophy of the institute she works for do wonders in changing students' beliefs about how they can learn from others and to embrace pluralism. I think that's what they walk away with. They say, 'More than English, I learned about diversity'.

3. Discussion

In analyzing the data, some themes emerge for consideration. The first theme deals with *the awareness of cultural differences* and how they are defined epistemologically. As demonstrated in the literature review section of this study, there are divergent ways of knowing and describing culture and language learning. Some interviewees feel more comfortable using descriptors such as "Oriental vs. Occidental", and "Asian vs. Western." Philip, for example, feels strongly about this dichotomy often describing characteristics of Occidental and Oriental societies. He believes that he is representative of "traditional" Chinese culture. While Mary does not identify with "traditional" Korean society, she stated that she generally feels more comfortable with *Western* ways of thinking, claiming that these are more "open and liberal". Jessica's discourse also illuminates distinctions between *Asian* students and others; she mentions that it is easier for her to communicate with fellow Asians. However, she further states that she is from a "mixed-up culture" with a variety of influences from both her family and her education. Coincidentally, John also says that his cultural identity is "mixed-up", but in opposition to Jessica, he feels more at ease with *Western* students. Grace, as the teacher, attempts to avoid monolithic cultural descriptions; however, she is aware of the stereotypical traits of Chinese students, for example, when discussing the exceptional dynamic of the three Chinese students in this class.

The second theme in the data, pertaining to the awareness of *the indissoluble link between language and cultural learning*, is in concert with the aforementioned body of literature. All participants acknowledged that in order to learn a different language, one has to learn cultural values that are different from one's own. They all expressed a strong desire to immerse themselves in the target language culture. All of the learners in this study have stayed with host families and make use of the wider "language lab" of Canadian culture. Philip, for example, would like to "join the Canadian society" as a means of learning English. Mary also says "...to learn English, I have to learn the culture. I have to *love* the culture". As an experienced teacher, Grace observes that generally, international students come with false expectations of participating in a typical Anglophone-dominated, Canadian classroom. They are somewhat disappointed with the reality of ESL programs that are composed of non-native speakers from non-target cultures.

The third theme reveals *the complexity of cultural perceptions of each participant as influenced by national, family, individual, and other factors*. The data suggests that each participant bears some features of his/her national culture. Clearly a person's country of origin exercises some influence on the identity and perceptions they carry to language learning and cultural immersion. In the case of the three Chinese learners, there is a shared sense of diligence and a common anxiety about test results – indicative of the emphasis of the traditional Chinese educational system. This anxiety is felt despite their high level of communicative ability. Although the Korean learner expressed a negative attitude toward her national culture, her compatriot classmates display characteristics typical of their country of origin. Through our observations and the teacher's comments, it is evident that

these students are eager to find the one "correct" answer, and to flow with the teacher's direction or with popular opinion in the class, rather than expressing dissenting opinions. Mary, on the other hand, while aware of her national cultural influence, is consciously attempting to keep a distance from it. The teacher in this study continually shuns nationally and linguistically defined identities, having been highly influenced by her language learning and ESL teaching experience. Perhaps, however, this kind of mentality is also supported in a Canadian pluralistic society.

Evidently, another factor that influences a person's cultural identity is his/her family background. The three Chinese learners are able to study in Canada due largely to the strong support of their families. In all cases, the families not only encourage them, but also financially support them and make all the arrangements for their studies overseas. Philip, in particular, values the impact of the older generations on his identity. His devotion and patriotism are a result of his family upbringing. Jessica enthusiastically expresses her gratitude to her mother who was a crucial role model in her character development. Mary does not explicitly talk about family influence, but she does mention that her mother, like all Koreans, would be "shocked" if she were to marry a non-Korean.

In addition to national and family influence, there are a host of other factors that contribute to individual characteristics. An especially interesting case study emerges in the data of John and Philip. Though these two share very similar family backgrounds, they display different traits. John values personal experience over upbringing and is indifferent to family stories and traditions. On the other hand, Philip would rather cling to the family tradition. While these two classmates get along very well, and at the surface seem similar, it is remarkable how different they are at the core. Mary has traveled in Europe and North America and feels that these cross-cultural experiences have shaped her perspective. She feels more comfortable in a multicultural society. Grace's multidimensional identity is reflected in her attitude toward the interculturality of the classroom.

In tying together the threads from the three themes that surface from the data, in conjunction with the concepts in the literature, we can appreciate that the classroom interculture is a combination of the national culture and the "multi-cultures" of individuals. The process of creating a classroom interculture involves a delicate negotiation among students and the teacher.

4. Conclusion

While some literature (Byram, 1989; Kramsch, 1993, 1999) suggests that teachers must initiate a very conscious and consciousness-raising process surrounding culture and meaning in the classroom, it seems that in this particular environment, a classroom interculture was created in a less conscious way. The teacher's sensitivity-raising activities focused mainly on team-building and group dynamics. This represents the conscious part of the teacher's process – planning activities that will contribute to the goal of building trust and cooperation. On the subconscious level, Grace often characterizes what she does as "second nature", claiming that "it is difficult to know exactly what I do" to facilitate intercultural competence in her students. From the perspective of the students in our study, they came with a conscious desire to participate actively in order to improve their English and broaden their knowledge, while they subconsciously strive to create cross-cultural connections. For both teacher and students, the process through which interculturality is achieved often involves intuition of how to get along with each other in certain situations as well as the development of evolving strategies for communicating with people from diverse backgrounds. While the surface of the immediate classroom interculture may be available for observation, the more profound results may require incubation. In the words of Grace:

> As a teacher, I think my responsibility is to open their minds, not necessarily teach them English...this might have been a failed exercise, but you don't know until you try. It may have been a successful one, but it's never immediately measurable. It may click sometime later; if in fact, they are developing this thing that I've been trying to achieve which was to [have them] think, to be open-minded – not about cultures – but just to want to learn and to be receptive and to try things out, and to experiment and to investigate. If they get that, then at some point they'll say, "Oh that makes sense to me".

This study is limited to a specific ESL classroom and therefore its findings are not generalizable. It

has, however, unveiled some contributing factors in the formation of classroom interculture. The implications for English Language Teaching are as abstract as notions of culture itself. Ambiguity is one of the features of the diverse ESL classroom (Ilieva, 2001). The nature of interculture is not a set form. It is fluid and flexible; therefore, adopting a unified methodological approach to teaching is not feasible. In different ESL settings where teachers face different groups of students with different cultural backgrounds, it is crucial to apply different techniques. As Warschauer states, "there is no single formula for how to handle issues of culture in teaching. Teachers will need to vary their approach depending on the particular audiences being taught and their purposes in learning English" (2000, p. 514). The creation of a classroom interculture involves forging a common path through unmapped terrain. When people are coming from different places, they assemble at a particular point at which a clear path is not readily available. They then attempt to walk towards a common destination through a negotiated path; however, the path may become immediately overgrown when the next group arrives at the same spot. Each group must negotiate its own path through this terrain. The road may be similar to those that have preceded it, but it can never be exactly the same. This diversity and infinite possibility is what makes the ESL landscape a rich and stimulating environment for all participants.

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Making the Most of Movies in the ESL Classroom

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Introduction

Films in the ESL classroom can build on the skills students already have, as most have seen films in their first language, and so have some understanding of how to interpret these visual texts. It is possible that all human civilizations have used story-telling as a way of passing on essential knowledge, so the narrative power of films makes them compelling and motivating.

Films can be an effective medium for contextualizing language use and language development, they can offer linguistic and cultural diversity in monolingual situations, and they have tremendous cross-cultural value. Films can provide an effective stimulus for the development of academic skills and can provide intellectual stimulation and enjoyment for both students and teachers.

However, films are still not that common in the majority of ESL classrooms, except as something of a gap-filler or as a relaxing and entertaining way of wrapping up a lesson or a course. Some ESL and EFL teachers, such as Chapple and Curtis (2000), have written about creating whole courses around film using content-based instruction, but it is possible to use very short film clips to generate a great deal of language.

Use of films

At the workshop I was invited to give at the TESL Ontario 2002 conference, I used six short film clips to illustrate some of what I have learned from more than 10 years of using film in ESL and EFL classrooms in Asia, Europe and North America. I used two two-minute film clips from each of the three films I chose: *The Bridges of Madison County*, *Dr. Dolittle* and *Pokemon the Movie*. The first film I have used with great success with adult audiences, the second with teen audiences, and the third with young learners.

One of the points I wanted to highlight is what I call a "utilization ratio" when using films. Many of the ESL teachers I have spoken with seem to use a 1:1 ratio, i.e., they will generate around 20 minutes of language work from about 20 minutes of film, which is the ratio I started with. After a couple of years, I was up to 2:1, then 5:1 and 10:1. Now, if I have chosen the film well, and prepared it carefully, I can reach 20:1, i.e., for two minutes of film, I can generate 40 minutes of language work in class.

I took the first two minutes of *The Bridges of Madison County* (made in 1995, starring Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep, and based on Richard Waller's novel) to show how it is possible to achieve such ratios. One of the reasons for the success of such short clips is that a great deal of meaning can be conveyed with relatively few words, like good poetry or short stories. If the script is well written and the scenes well shot, many features of the language can be seen in a short space of time. Here are the first two minutes of Bridges:

Francesca: Hi

Robert: I get the distinct feeling I'm lost.

Francesca: Are you supposed to be in Iowa?

Robert: Yeah.

Francesca: Well then, you're not that lost.

Robert: I'm looking for a bridge. One of those covered bridges out here in this neighbourhood.

Francesca: Rosamunde Bridge?

Robert: That's it.

Francesca: Well you're pretty close. It's only about 2 miles from here.

Robert: Which way?

Francesca: Well, you go that way and come to Carter's and turn left.

Robert: Cutter's?

Francesca: Carter's, a farm. Small house, close to the road. Big, mean, yellow dog.

Robert: Big, mean, yellow dog. Okay.

Francesca: Yeah, then you go along that road until you come to a fort, and, it's only less than a half a mile.

Robert: And then where after the fork?

Francesca: The right, and then you.... No, no, not that fork, excuse me. You pass Peterson's.

Robert: Peterson's.

Francesca: Peterson's the farm, and past the old school house you turn left. It would be easier to tell you if the roads were marked.

Robert: Yeah it certainly would.

Francesca: Well I can take you if you want. Or I can tell you. I can take you or tell you. Either way it's up to you. I don't care.

Robert: Well I wouldn't want to take you away from what you're doing.

Francesca: No, I was just going to have some iced tea and then split the atom. But that can wait.

Robert: Okay.

Francesca: I'll just get my shoes.

Although this scene is only two minutes and contains only about 200 words of dialogue, using a simple system of language labels I have developed with language teachers and students over the years, I have identified nearly 20 examples of communicative events in this short clip:

Verbal humour	Irony
Emphatic markers	Giving directions
Contracted forms	Questions created using tone
Minimal pairs	Sequencing of adjectives in English
Clarification questions	Verbal feedback strategies
Self-correction	Offering-and-accepting sequences
Emphatic agreement	Feigned indifference
Cause-effect markers	Question-and-answer sequences

These are not categories of speech that would be recognized by formal linguists, nor are all of them identified by all of the adult groups I show this clip to. But after working with this film, and others like it, with students in many different countries, these are the aspects of language that they have seen and brought to my attention.

The two dozen turns can be broken down into four parts, each of increasing length. Although the first turn is only about 20 words long, four distinct aspects of the language have been noted:

Robert: Hi. I get the distinct feeling I'm lost.

Francesca: Are you supposed to be in Iowa?

Robert: Yeah.

Francesca: Well, then, you're not that lost.

- Verbal humour
- Irony
- Cause-and-effect markers (then)
- Emphatic markers (that)

Some of the aspects of the language noted are at the single-word level, whereas others involve the whole "chunk" of discourse. This is one of the reasons why film dialogue can be such a rich medium for language teaching.

The next turn is only 30 words long, but again, another four distinct aspects of the language can be seen:

Robert: I'm looking for a bridge. One of those covered bridges out here in this neighbourhood.

Francesca: Rosamunde Bridge?

Robert: That's it.

Francesca: Well you're pretty close. It's only about 2 miles from here.

Robert: Which way?

- Giving directions
- Question-and-answer sequences
- Contracted forms
- Questions created using tone (rising)

All of us have tried to teach the skill of giving and receiving directions, and many textbooks have tried too. However, the textbooks tend not to be successful at modeling authentic oral interaction of this kind – "real talk" – in part because they remove much of what really happens, the "conversational clutter," for the sake of clarity. However, in so doing, they also create a lack of authenticity. One thing that makes good films "good" is their authenticity of dialogue and interaction, and this is shown in this scene. The next segment of dialogue is still only 60 words, and lasts less than a minute, but again shows up to four additional aspects of the target language.

Francesca: Well, you go that way and come to Carter's and turn left.

Robert: Cutter's?

Francesca: Carter's, a farm. Small house, close to the road. Big, mean, yellow dog.

Robert: Big, mean, yellow dog. Okay.

Francesca: Yeah, then you go along that road until you come to a fork, and, ah, it's only less than a half a mile.

Robert: And then where after the fork?

- Minimal pairs (Cutter's vs Carter's)
- Sequencing of adjectives in English
- Clarification questions
- Verbal feedback strategies (the listener repeating the words of the speaker, with a flat or falling tone)

The fourth and final part of this two-minute clip is about 110 words, but still lasts less than one minute, and again illustrates at least four more and four different aspects of the language.

Francesca: The right, and then you.... No, no, not that fork, excuse me. You pass Peterson's.

Robert: Peterson's.

Francesca: Peterson's the farm, and past the old school house you turn left. It would be easier to tell you if the roads were marked.

Robert: Yeah, it certainly would.

Francesca: Well I can take you if you want. Or I can tell you. I can take you or tell you, either way it's up to you. I don't care.

Robert: Well I wouldn't want to take you away from what you're doing.

Francesca: No, I was just going to have some iced tea and then split the atom, but that can wait.

Robert: OK.

Francesca: I'll just get my shoes.

- Self-correction
- Offering-and-accepting sequences
- Emphatic agreement
- Feigned indifference

Even in this two-minute clip, there are more than 16 speech events/speech acts listed; for example, non-verbal feedback strategies can be seen in most of these four subsections, and some subsections, such as the one above, also show aspects of the language seen in other clips, like verbal humour and/or irony: "No I was just going to have some iced tea and then split the atom, but that can wait."

The reason for noting the time of the overall clip and the segments of the clip is that this means that even in a 30-minute lesson, a two-minute film clip can be shown five times and still leave two-thirds of the remaining time for teaching and learning. Although there may be some disagreement about which clips show what aspects of the language, it should be clear by now that the idea of "doing more with less" is a useful way of thinking about how we use film in ESL classrooms.

Although there is not space here to go into the same kind of detail for the second two-minute clip of *Bridges*, it is worth noting that the second two minutes have been used successfully to show another 16 different aspects, features and functions of the target language:

Expressing surprise

Non-verbal communication: brief touch

"Back-tracking" (returning to earlier points in the same conversation)

Creating conversational closure

Tenses for personal story-telling

Pre-questioning strategies (checking if it is acceptable to ask a question before asking)

NNSE (non-native speaker of English) language production

One-word exchanges using tone to communicate meaning

Asking about a person's background

Asking "personal" questions (e.g., age, marital status)

Changes in suprasegmentals (rhythm, stress and intonation)

NNSE language behaviour (using body language to support/substitute for words)

Making "small talk"

Non-verbal humour (visual humour)

Non-native-speaker responses: unexpected answers

Giving adjectives in threes

Altogether, then, just four minutes of film, which could be shown many times in even the shortest of language lessons, could be used to illustrate more than 30 aspects of communication in the target language.

In the workshop, two-minute film clips were also shown from the other two films, the 2001 remake of *Dr. Dolittle* (starring Eddie Murphy) and the Japanese animated film, *Pokemon, The Movie*. *Dr. Dolittle* works partly because most of the talking characters are animals, who are given qualities and characteristics of the kind possessed by any good human actor. The animal actors use slang, colloquial and idiomatic language, and even have regional U.S. accents, which makes this kind of film successful with teenaged learners, and especially with learners at the intermediate level or above. Another interesting aspect of a film like this new *Dr. Dolittle*, and one I had not expected, is that it presents images that help counter negative stereotypes. In Hong Kong, for example, as a person of colour myself, I discovered that a significant number of my undergraduate students – many of whom were planning to become teachers of English and other subjects – had been fed narrow and belittling images of people of colour. In the new *Dr. Dolittle*, my students were faced, for the first time, with images of an African-American family that was well-educated, wealthy and successful. As one student put it: "None of the criminals were black. The hero was black." So, even a light comedy like this can be used to make some very serious points.

The final two, two-minute clips I showed were from a movie I have used with great success with young ESL learners in many different countries, *Pokemon, The Movie*. One of the most interesting things about the Pokemon creatures, small pocket-sized monsters, is that each creature only says one word, which is their name. For example, the best-known little monster is called Pikachu, who communicates everything s/he wants to say using the word "Pikachu" said in dozens of different ways. Such animated films are very good for teaching and learning vocabulary on colour, shape, size and number. Also, because of the amount of visual repetition – in the first two-minute opening scene, five monsters are introduced, one at a time, each with a brief description from the narrator – there are many opportunities for recycling of language items. Such films are also good for developing vocabulary on parts of the body (animal and human) and for building up adjectival phrases from single words. For example, in one scene, we are able to build up, one word at a time, from "an apple" to "a big, red apple, high up in the tree."

Even with such a "simple" film as an animated movie for children, there is still a narrative element that encourages the viewer/listener to want to know what happens next, and it is this desire to know that makes the movie industry the multibillion dollar business that it is today.

Films can be used with language learners at any level and even in the shortest of language lessons, as long as we are able to see films as an opportunity to do more with less.

Chapple, L. & Curtis, A. (2000). Content-based instruction in Hong Kong: Student responses to film. *System*, 28 (3), 419-433.

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Using Children's Literature to Teach Multicultural/Antiracism Education

Robert Courchêne, University of Ottawa

> Once the opinion makers of one group label another group as "other", the possibility of intolerance arises.
> (Oberdiek, 2001, 42).

Literature, like culture, is universal; it is a reflection of a given culture but in some ways also shapes that culture. Some Jewish Old Testament scholars believe that the stories found in Pentateuch (first published in their existing form around 600 BCE) not only tell of the experience of the Israelites but through their transmission and (re)reading, shaped them as a people. The same could also be said of the Koran, the teachings of Buddha, or the oral histories of many Aboriginal nations. Through its literature – both oral and written – future members of various cultural groups learn about the history, memories and experiences that help explain who they were, how they have come to be who they are, and, in some way, their potential for the future – the paradox of culture is that it is both limiting and liberating at the same time.

Literature as an expression of a given culture transmits its traditions, history, rituals, norms, myths, stereotypes, beliefs and values. For example, fairy tales from various countries reveal attitudes towards good and evil, gender roles, the supernatural, nature – including human nature, punishment, retribution, etc. By the time most children arrive at school, they have had at least some contact with the literature of their own and that of the dominant culture if they are not part of it (in some cases, minority[1] culture children will only have had contact with the latter). They have a general idea of what happens in fairly tales (Walt Disney has seen to this for generations of North Americans!); they know that in the end, good triumphs over evil but for this to happen the hero or heroine has to undergo some form of trial or test. How clearly this is illustrated in the books of Harry Potter! Given not only children's familiarity with but also love of literature, using it to talk about multicultural issues and teach antiracism is an easily taken, logical step.

Children's literature, fiction and non-fiction, provides us with material to examine an endless list of themes: family, separation, immigration and settlement, friends/friendship, acceptance, prejudice (see Kezwer (1995) and Coelho (2002) for a more detailed list of themes and sources). As well, with the availability of literature from other cultures, it is frequently possible to find a number of stories that deal with the same theme. While the example that readily comes to mind is Cinderella[2], an excellent text for talking about stereotypes and gender roles, most cultures have stories about families, death and dying, rewarding good and punishing evil, the role of some form of magic, or the supernatural. While these stories most often take the form of fairy tales, others exist as myths, legends or what might be loosely called "bedtime stories". While space restrictions make it impossible to treat a large number of themes, the focus will be on the use of literature to talk about and challenge stereotypes. Prior to doing so, however, I would like to provide a brief overview of the various approaches to multicultural/antiracism education.

Approaches to multicultural/ antiracism education

According to Banks (1999) and Coelho (2002), we can talk about multicultural education at four different levels. Although the nomenclature is not exactly the same, there is significant overlap between the two.

Banks' (1995) Four Levels	Coelho's (2002) Four Levels	
		Multiculturalism
Contributions	Heroes and Holidays	ß
Cultural Additives	Multiculturalism as a Subject	ß
Transformational	Multiple Perspectives	ß
Social Action	Social Action	Antiracism

Coelho sees the four stages as a continuum with multicultural education at one end and antiracism education at the other (I am certain that Banks would also accept such a continuum). While a given lesson may have as its principal focus one of the four levels, lessons often integrate more than one of the four approaches. Finally, multiculturalism for teachers and students is a journey; they need to work at the level they feel comfortable. Plunging in at the social action level without previously engaging in multicultural education frequently does not produce the desired results. Becoming a multicultural/antiracism teacher, like making tea, requires time and steeping.

Stereotypes: What is a stereotype?

According to *Racism, Let's Stop It!*, the annual publication of Canadian Heritage that forms part of its campaign to combat racism[3], stereotypes can be defined as follows:

> Beliefs held by individuals about the presumed physical and psychological characteristics of members of a social category. These beliefs can be either positive or negative . When applied so generally that individual differences are not recognized, or even defined, they are considered impediments to quality human relations.

For Ghosh (1996),

> Stereotypes are social constructs in which groups of people are identified in terms of *fixed images* associated with specific attributes, particularly those of culture or colour (author's italics). (p. 11).

According to Collier (1995, p. 167), "...every ism is based on overgeneralization and negative stereotyping...Isms are very common and destructive to relationships". What is important to retain from these definitions is that stereotypes are seen as fixed, whereas cultures are dynamic; the Inuit have evolved in important ways as a people over the past few decades, whereas many non-Inuit retain the frozen-in-time stereotype of who they are. Stereotypes are thumbnail sketches that are overgeneralized to encapsulate an entire culture; finally, they are social constructs with the dominant cultural group(s) determining the content of the construct. Even positive stereotypes do not capture the essence and dynamic of a given culture.

Lesson Plan[4]
Level: Primary-Junior
Multicultural Focus: Transformational/ Multiple Perspectives

If problems arise in the classroom or on the playground from stereotypes that one group holds of another, they must be dealt with in a non-threatening and supportive manner. Whether children are making fun of someone because of his/her physical characteristics (calling a Chinese child "slant eyes" or an overweight kid "fatso"), skin colour (calling a black child a "nigger") or religion (calling people who wear turbans, "towelheads"), etc., the school cannot let children believe that it is acceptable to make fun of others based on misshapen and mistaken stereotypes. In what follows, I present the outline of a lesson that could be used to first introduce the subject of stereotypes in a non-threatening way for children and then to confront the issue directly.

Max Velthuijis has written a number of books for children. One of my favourites is *Frog and the Stranger* (1993) dedicated to all the animals on the earth whatever their colour or shape. At present seven bilingual versions exist with English as the anchor language: Turkish, Somali, Bengali, Vietnamese, etc. There is also a French-language version. The review of the book found on the *Indigo* website (www.indigo.ca) describes the storyline as follows:

> Frog's friends are unhappy when Rat, a stranger, sets up camp at the edge of the woods. But Frog doesn't mind that Rat is different and the two become friends. Soon,

> Frog's friends learn to appreciate that different does not mean bad and that their ideas about rats were all wrong . . . This outstanding title featuring the popular character Frog addresses the subject of prejudice with sensitivity and subtlety, in dual language.

I would begin the lesson by asking children to talk about the concept of Stranger:

> Who/What is a Stranger (brainstorm children's beliefs about strangers in their culture, advice given to children about strangers, etc.). Group their responses to make a semantic web.

I would encourage children to share stories about any encounters they have had with strangers in their lives; I would hope that they would be both positive and negative. One could compare the ideas found in the semantic web with actual experiences.

I would then introduce the story, *Frog and the Stranger*, along with the characters: Frog, Duck, Hare, Pig and Rat. Once I was assured that the children were familiar with these animals, I would then place them into culturally heterogeneous groups and assign each group one of the characters. Each group would be asked to list the qualities of its animal and give reasons for its choices. One could also use this as a class-based activity. Each group would be asked to present its animal profile to the class. Next, have students draw a picture of each character and prepare a semantic map or chart of the characteristics and display it in the class. Students would be encouraged to bring in other relia associated with their chosen animal; i.e., muppet characters, songs, pictures.

Pre-Reading: Character Profiles		
Character	Qualities	Reasons
Frog		
Duck		
Hare		
Pig		
Rat		

Presentation of the story

There are obviously many ways to present the story; one possible way is outlined below:

> Setting >Arrival of the stranger>Reactions of the different animals to the stranger> Critical incidents or events >Change in attitude >Climax > End of story

As the story unfolded, I would ask students to predict what they think will happen and to subsequently verify their predictions. I would also include a number of comprehension checks to ensure that all the students were getting the gist of the story. Once the story had been read and talked about by the students, I would ask them to get into their original groups, to examine the semantic maps prepared prior to hearing the story and, where necessary, make and explain any changes. They would then prepare a new semantic map or chart and drawing for each animal.

Post-Reading: Character Profiles		
Character	Qualities	Reasons
Frog		
Duck		
Hare		
Pig		
Rat		

As a next step, I would ask children what they had learned from the story. I would hope this would provide the context to introduce the concept of stereotypes: what they are, why we use them, what they tell us. I would get the children to talk about the stereotypes they have about people, places and things.

Once the children had shared their stereotypes, I would then deal directly with the problem that had occasioned the lesson. Let us say, for example, that the students were making fun of an Aboriginal or Aboriginal children in class.

1) Ask the children to brainstorm what they know about Aboriginal peoples and their culture. Put the children's ideas on the board or on a flipchart, and, with their help, group them into different areas: traditions, rituals, history, stories, etc.

2) Assign different groups of children in the class to research one of the topic areas and have them present it to the class. Each presentation could take the form of a poster with a mix of text and relia (it would depend on the age and linguistic ability of the students). The research

done by the students could also be collected and published in the form of a book that could be used by future students.

3) Compare the research findings of the students with the cultural profile they prepared before undertaking their research. Try to elicit the fact that people and their cultures change over time – culture as dynamic vs. culture as museum.

4) Have representatives from the aboriginal community and/or the children's parents come in to talk about Aboriginal culture and how it has changed. If possible, visits to museums or interpretation centres would also be very useful. The class could organize an Aboriginal Day, integrating their own research as well as related activities.

Follow-Up

A number of activities could be used for the follow-up phase:

1) Have the students watch one of the films from the *Playing Fair* series (See Appendix A for a description of the films in this series) produced by the National Film Board of Canada: *Mela's Lunch*, *Walker*, *Hey, Kelly!*, and *Carole's Mirror*. Each of these 10 to 12 minute films dealing with some form of discrimination or prejudice based on a stereotype comes with a study guide and a series of questions. Ask students to take note of the stereotypes found in the film and propose possible solutions. Another possibility would be to divide the students into groups and assign each group a film to watch and present to the class.

2) Students could also read books dealing with stereotypes; if their literacy levels make this impossible, the teacher could read one or more of these books as part of the unit or for "Story Time". In either case, the students would be asked to identity stereotypes. The following are possible titles; the films in brackets from the *Playing Fair* series deal with the same or similar themes.

   i) *Angel Child, Dragon Child (Mela's Lunch)*

   ii) *Amazing Grace (Carole's Mirror)*

   iii) *The Moccasin Goalie*

   iv) *I Miss Franklin P. Shuckles*

Lesson Plan: An Inclusive Alphabet
Level: Primary-Junior/Adult
Multicultural Focus: Contributions/ Heroes and Holidays

A lesson that I have used with both children and adults is the building of an inclusive alphabet, one that reflects the cultural composition of the class. The focus can be limited or expanded into a larger unit. The recent publication of a number of alphabet books, including the one that received the Governor-General's Medal for Children's Literature, has certainly eased preparation and added richness to this lesson (see the reference list for titles). While the followup focuses on a country-based alphabet, other themes are certainly possible: animals, plants, sports, occupations, etc. Topic selection would depend on age level, class composition, students' interests, etc. This lesson creates a feeling of belonging for all the students in the class as they each see their country, culture and language represented around the classroom.

Inclusive Alphabet: My Country and Our Class

1. Ask students (in groups) to prepare an alphabet from their country supported by pictures and script in their own language (students may need to get help from their parents or possibly older students in the school from the same cultural group – an excellent opportunity to set up a buddy system or for student co-op placements).

2. Students with a strong knowledge of Canada can prepare regionally-based alphabets: prairie, northern, maritime, etc.

3. Post the alphabets around the room; have the various groups talk about their alphabets.

4. Select an alphabet for the class from the versions presented by the students; use student's native language and English; publish the classroom alphabet; ask each student to illustrate a letter (one chosen from his/her alphabet). Where possible, the chosen alphabet could be multilingual.

5. As an interesting follow-up, one could use the activity "We all fit in" (an idea I borrowed from my sister). Using a large sheet of paper, create a jigsaw puzzle with the same number of pieces as students in the classroom (it might be good to have a couple of spares for latecomers). Give each

student a piece of the puzzle and have them write their name on it beginning with an oversized first letter:

Chrysandre. Then ask the students to work as a class to put the puzzle together. What you end up with is a class, named-based alphabet. An interesting by-product of the activity is the negotiation that must take place to assemble the puzzle.

Sample Lesson: Bread, Rice or Noodles
Level: Adaptable to all levels
Multicultural Focus: Multiculturalism as a Subject

Finally, I would like to propose a group of lessons that lend themselves across-the-curriculum and provide a multi-intelligence approach in terms of teaching and learning activities. For this type of lesson, I suggest a thematic approach allowing for exploration of the content in many subject areas. The lesson can focus on housing, transportation, clothing, food (see below), etc. While such lessons are part of the normal curriculum, the teacher examines them from within the framework of multicultural education. They show how people around the world may differ, for example, in terms of housing, and help students realize that 'different' does not mean 'inferior', but, that the customs should be valued, accepted and respected. The lessons should help to dispel negative stereotypes students have learned.

Norma Dooley has written three short books: *Everybody Bakes Bread, Everybody Cooks Rice, Everybody Brings Noodles* (see reference list for details) In these books, she explores how different cultures prepare their staple food. In addition to the story, she also includes recipes, some of which could be made in a home-economics classroom. Topics, such as bread-making, can be examined from many points of view: historical, scientific, geographical, nutritional, social, etc. and can include writing, art, music and hands-on activities. A sample, unedited, lesson plan prepared by students in my multiculturalism class is presented here:

Ideas for a theme-based lesson: We All Eat Bread

- **Brainstorm**
  - What do you eat everyday? What did you have for breakfast?
  - Different types of bread, how/when you eat it, where it comes from, favourite kinds, how it's made...
- **Read** an article or story in class about bread: e.g., *Everybody Bakes Bread*
- *History*
  - Religious significance, celebrations, origin of bread, and invention of different types: bagels, pitas, flat bread, tortillas...
- *Geography*
  - Where bread comes from in Canada – farm and agriculture.
  - Use a map of the world to display where bread comes from.
- *Science*
  - How bread is made; what yeast does.
    - Have a baker come in to explain how bread is made.
    - Students watch a video about the process.
- *Nutrition*
  - The importance of bread in your diet.
- *'Show and Tell'*
  - Students bring in bread from their countries to present to the class
    - Talk about ways of eating it, family traditions...
    - Eat the bread and talk about the differences as a class.
    - Take a class picture with all the bread.
- **Research** (in groups in class, or independently at home)
  - What culture the bread is from,
  - How to prepare it,

- What it is eaten with,
- Family traditions,
- Interview a family member.
    - Draw and include information about bread on bread cutouts and post them all over the classroom (or use them to form a book).
    - Prepare a short paragraph with their findings and present it to the class.
    - Prepare a poster of information to present to the class.
- "Bread of the week" – pick names from the breadbox.

- **Recipes**
    - Have students bring in a bread recipe that reflects their culture.
    - Students will collectively assemble a special class recipe book. Each student will receive his or her own copy.
- **Baking**

  Bake bread in class,
- **Field Trips**
    - Museum of Agriculture: bread museum, featuring different grains, exhibits
    - A bakery

A note about language

I have not talked about language; however, without it, students would not be able to do the above-listed activities. As the teacher works through the lessons with students, it would certainly be necessary to provide students with mini-language lessons to enable them to perform specific tasks. For example, if one wanted to compare/contrast how bread was made in two different countries, students would need to know the "grammar" of comparison and contrast. I would see such lessons coming out of the tasks; using this approach helps students see the connection between language and task accomplishment. English can be used, as can their native language, to perform the same communicative acts.

Conclusion

In this brief presentation, I have provided a few examples of how literature can be used to introduce and support discussion of various aspects of multicultural education. There are no magic formulas or short cuts to accepting and respecting the diversity we find in our classroom. As teachers (and, therefore, learners) and administrators in schools, we have the tools to fight prejudice and discrimination; we have to do this firmly but in a way that attacks the root cause without denigrating the person. In most cases, ignorance and fear are at the origin of racist ideas and behaviours. As educators, we must create classrooms where students believe that they are valued for who they are and not just tolerated for what they are.

> The man who sat on the ground in his tipi
> meditating on life and its meaning,
> accepting the kinship of all creatures and
> acknowledging unity with the universe
> of things, was infusing into his being the true
> essence of civilization.
>
> (Chief Luther Standing Bear, Lakota)

Appendix A

PLAYING FAIR SERIES: WALKER

Produced by Penny Ritco and Wolf Koenig; directed by Alanis Obomsawin, National Film Board of Canada, 1992. VHS cassette, 13:53 min., $79.00 for four-video set. All distributed by the National Film Board of Canada.

PLAYING FAIR SERIES: CAROL'S MIRROR

Produced by Penny Ritco and Wolf Koenig; directed by Selwyn Jacob, National Film Board of Canada, 1992. VHS cassette, 14:05 min.

PLAYING FAIR SERIES: HEY, KELLY!

Produced by Penny Ritco and Wolf Koenig; directed by Sook-Yin Lee, National Film Board of Canada, 1992. VHS cassette, 15:10 min.

PLAYING FAIR SERIES: MELA'S LUNCH

Produced by Penny Ritco and Wolf Koenig; directed by Sugith Varughese, National Film Board of Canada, 1992. VHS cassette, 14:23 min.

Overview of the films

MaryLynn Gagné

Playing Fair is a series of four videotapes that can be used with children to stimulate discussion of

racism and related issues. Four minority groups are targeted in the series – Aboriginal people, Asian-Canadians, East Indians, and Black Canadians. In each of the four programs, a talented multicultural cast acts out a specific incident involving discrimination, prejudice, or racial stereotyping.

Playing Fair tackles the issues surrounding racism at a very personal level, clearly demonstrating how racist attitudes and racial slurs affect the victims as well as the perpetrators and onlookers. In *Mela's Lunch*, Allison comes to realize that not standing up for her friend is as hurtful as actively participating in the ostracism practised by the rest of the group. In *Walker*, young Jamie discovers that his distrust of Indians was as unfounded as his fear of dogs. *Carol's Mirror* illustrates how stereotyping restricts everyone involved in a school production of «Snow White.» In *Hey, Kelly!*, Robert's racist notions begin to crumble as he interacts with Kelly during an after-school detention.

The overall quality of the series is excellent. The young actors are appealing and convincing, the dialogue is only occasionally contrived (a major feat in this type of production!), and the stories have enough added «colour» to hold the interest of the intended audience. Background music suited to each program is used to good effect.

This series presents a graphic view of racism among school children that is at times difficult to watch. Jamie's bullying older brother and his friend call Walker a «little wahoo» and refer to him as «it»; Robert tells Kelly that he doesn't want a «Chink girl» touching him and imitates the Chinese language in a mocking sing-song voice; Mela's classmates refuse to sit with her and express disgust at the sight of her East-Indian meal. Educators who may be concerned that some elementary school students have never been exposed to this degree of racism will have to remind themselves that children's awareness and sensitivity cannot be expanded without exploring issues that may be painful and upsetting.

Playing Fair goes beyond fostering tolerance and acceptance – it encourages students to reflect critically on the impact of the racism and to move toward positions of empathy, positive action, and advocacy. The series is a welcome addition to a growing list of high-quality curriculum-level materials available in the area of anti-racist education. Teaching suggestions and ideas for follow-up activities are included on the text of each video jacket.

Highly recommended: Grades 2 to 6 / Ages 7 to 11

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www.acpl.lib.in.us/Childrens_Services/alphabet.html

www.yvettemoore.com/books.html (mostly Canadian)

1. I do not like using such terms because as soon as a group is labelled (labelling is an obsession in Western culture) as 'minority', 'at risk', etc., it becomes singled out as an "other" group, usually in relation to the dominant one. It is not valued for what it itself is.
2. More that 700 versions exist, including three Canadian Aboriginal versions.
3. Each year, Canadian Heritage publishes two teachers' guides, one for the primary level, the other for the secondary. Each guide contains an overview of antiracism education, lesson plans, resources and a glossary of terms.
4. I taught this as a sample lesson to the students in my class on multiculturalism. Because most of them still enjoy reading children's literature, it was a great success. They saw how the same methodology could be used with older school-aged students and adults.

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The Importance of Collocation in English Language Teaching

Anna Kozlowski and Linda Seymour

Introduction

The following article discusses the importance of collocation in language acquisition. It includes background information, a definition of collocation, together, with some examples, the implications of new research and the importance of including collocation in everyday classroom activities. In addition, a sample collocation activity at an advanced level is provided.

Background Information

What is collocation? In linguistics, collocation is the way some words occur regularly whenever another word is used. (*Collins English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2001).

In recent years, the term 'collocation' has been used frequently in language teaching publications. It is beginning to appear in language teaching materials. It has almost become the buzzword of the moment. Although collocation might seem a new concept related to vocabulary learning, its importance of collocation came to light several decades ago.

Before the 1970s, scant attention had been given to vocabulary learning. While it emphasized syntactic and phonological systems, there was no systematic teaching of vocabulary. Building an extensive lexicon was never considered, because it was assumed that once the learner internalized both the structures and the sounds of a foreign language, he would learn its vocabulary easily.

The beginning of the 1970s saw a sudden change in attitude towards this aspect of language. The complexity of the vocabulary-learning process and the importance of systematic vocabulary teaching were clearly recognized. Based on extensive research in the areas of linguistics and psycholinguistics, by A. Szulc and others, it became evident that particular words in a language are grouped in a purely arbitrary, conventional fashion, reflecting the fact that every language community accumulates and organizes its experience in a different way. These conventional word groupings are referred to as collocations. Every individual word in a language has its own range of collocates (i.e. words that often occur together), which limits its meaningful usage. Equivalents in other languages rarely, if ever, have the same range of collocates. Learners tend to subconsciously group foreign language words according to the patterns of their native languages, producing unconventional, instead of conventional, word combinations. This practice often results in incorrect and awkward language. For example, the expression *on the loose*, directly translated into Polish has a completely different meaning: *very relaxed*. In the early 1970s, linguists studied and gained important insights about the role of memory in the process of language acquisition, and presented hypothetical models of our mental lexicons.

In describing a model of a mental lexicon, E. Shubin suggests that it is necessary to distinguish between language production skills (speaking and writing) and language reception skills (listening and reading). According to Shubin, there are two mechanisms situated in the brain that are responsible for communication.

Communicator of production	**Communicator of reception**
includes more complex signs, e.g. words, collocations, sentences, short texts, encoded in long term memory, ready to use	includes more basic signs, e.g. basic forms of words without recursive forms

During the process of reception, meaning can be decoded from form and context; however, single words adequate for reception are not enough to produce correct and fluent language because rules of combining words are conventional. The store of receptive signs cannot be transformed into the store of productive signs without adding thousands of matrices of such ready-made items as collocations and sentences. Errors in transmitting messages are most often a consequence of insufficient knowledge of longer word combinations.

In view of these facts, it was concluded that in order to prevent such mistakes and to diminish native language interference, systematic vocabulary learning with an emphasis on unconventional word groupings should be stressed. Under no circumstances can one attain proficiency in a foreign language without extensive knowledge of its vocabulary.

Unfortunately, for the most part, the above mentioned conclusions had little impact on the way language was taught over the next two decades.

There was renewed interest in vocabulary-related aspects of language in the 1990s because descriptions of English had improved dramatically when a large collection of linguistic data and sophisticated methods of analysis became available on computer. In 1991, the first language corpus, the Bank of English, was launched at the University of Birmingham. Since then, other banks of English have appeared, e.g. the British National Corpus. These collections of modern English language, including a variety of books, newspapers, magazines and millions of words of transcribed natural speech allow linguists to search for patterns of word combinations, check word frequencies, and see examples of all the uses of particular words. As a result, the scope of research has widened considerably, and it has become possible to verify many hypotheses about language. However, in terms of collocation, it became apparent that the extent to which language is fixed is even greater than previously recognized, meaning that a vast amount of language appears in patterns that are completely arbitrary.

Examples of Collocations and Collocation Patterns

It is difficult to define precisely the term *collocation*. As cited in the introduction, the Collins dictionary defines a collocation as a regular combination of words. Other definitions refer to frequency. Before describing the different categories of collocations, it is important to understand what is meant by this word. Frequency can be understood to mean the following:

a) The likelihood of combinations of words occurring together: for example, when the word 'insurmountable' is seen, the word *problem* or *difficulty* will be there.

b) How often a word combination is used in language: for example, the phrase *an insurmountable problem* is not used by the average English speaker as frequently in spoken or written language as the combination *a big problem*.

Linguists have placed collocations into three main categories:

Strong Collocations

These are very specific collocations. They combine with few, if any, other words, and they are narrow and not predictable in meaning. The learner has no exact equivalent in his or her own language. They do not occur as frequently in everyday spoken or written language and often relate to particular fields, such as law or business. An example of this is the adjective *extenuating*, which combines almost exclusively with the noun *circumstances* and is used commonly to discuss legal or business matters. Other examples of strong collocations are: *a bumper crop, a flagrant disregard for* ***something****, a deadpan expression, painfully shy, rancid butter* and *to galvanize* ***someone*** *into action*. Many idioms and phrasal verbs are also examples of strong collocations and have been given a lot of attention, but these are often categorized separately.

Medium Collocations

These are higher frequency combinations with regard to usage. Students may often be aware of and understand individual words but may not be aware that they can be combined with certain words to produce phrases that they cannot translate into their own languages. For example, they may know the word *address* but not know that you can *address a problem*. They will certainly understand the word *loud* but not know that one can wear *a loud shirt*. They will know the word *heavy* but not realize that one can be *a heavy smoker*. Most learners of English will associate the words *address, loud* ***and*** *heavy* with other more predictable combinations.

Weak Collocations

Weak collocations are combinations that are easily understood. For example, words such as *loud / heavy / long / short / good / bad /* combine logically with numerous nouns.

From a teaching perspective, linguists suggest that teachers direct students to useful combinations that have a high priority in the language and not spend a lot of time on more obvious and easily acquired patterns. Students should be encouraged to look for, then focus on, combinations that they don't expect to find together. There is no need to focus on phrases like *heavy furniture* or heavy *books, loud music* or *a loud voice* but rather on less predictable combinations like *a heavy smoker, heavy seas, a loud shirt* or *addressing a meeting*. In other words, the teacher is well advised to direct students' attention to medium collocations.

Collocational Patterns

Linguistically, collocations can be grouped into the following patterns:

Examples:

Adjective + noun *a lingering kiss/an immediate problem/ a major decision*

Noun + noun *a cell phone/a laptop computer/ a credit card*

Verb + adjective + noun *make a difficult decision/solve a complex problem*

Verb + adverb *indulge freely/dislike intensely/ accomplish easily*

Adverb + verb *strongly contest/completely disagree/freely admit*

Adverb + adjective *extremely harmful/totally abandoned/strongly critical*

Verb + preposition + noun *invest in a stock/ apply for a loan/join in a game*

Longer Chunks

Collocations can also exist in longer chunks that can be memorized as fixed patterns.

Examples:

seriously disagree with ratifying the Kyoto accord

adverb + verb + preposition + gerund + noun

completely ignore the pressing problem in North Korea

adverb + verb + adjective + noun + preposition + noun

put someone into quarantine

verb + noun + preposition + noun

the disadvantage of having a credit card is that.....

noun + preposition + gerund + noun + noun clause

Longer chunks are extremely useful because when students memorize longer chunks of language, they are also memorizing grammatical structure (Michael Lewis). According to some linguists, it is not grammar but lexis that is central to successful language learning. The over-analysis of grammatical structure does not produce competent language. Current linguistic theories recognize that grammar and lexis cannot be separated, but rather must be dealt with together.

The Importance of Collocation

Collocation constitutes a large part of our mental lexicons

Linguists and teachers now attach far greater importance to the role memory plays in acquiring language. According to recent research, our mental lexicons are extremely large. First-language learners have the ability to store in their heads huge amounts of memorized text, mathematical formulae, addresses, telephone numbers, dates, poetry, proverbs, idioms, names and quotes to name but a few. These can be quickly and easily retrieved when required.

> " Estimates vary but it is possible that 70% of what we say, hear, read or write is to be found in some form of fixed expression.....two, three, four and even five-word collocations make up a huge percentage of all naturally occurring text."
>
> (Teaching Collocation; Further Developments in the Lexical Approach by Michael Lewis)

Current theories suggest that second-language learners also have the ability to store language in chunks. What is important for a second-language learner is repetition. Language patterns need to be heard, written, spoken and read a number of times in order for them to become fixed. Teachers should be constantly recycling language patterns through listening, speaking, reading and writing activities.

Collocation enables students to express ideas clearly and accurately

In vocabulary-learning and teaching, students and teachers often focus on word definitions.

Students memorize definitions and can understand and say what words mean, but they are totally unable to use the words to produce accurate language. Students need to be shown examples of how words are used and what words they collocate with and also that adjectives, nouns, adverbs, verbs, and prepositions are combined. Teachers must instruct students that words cannot be learned in isolation. For example, one of the meanings of the verb *to diet* is to lose weight. In order for students to use the word effectively, they need to know that a person can */diet/go on a diet/be on a diet/start a diet/*. We do not, for example, *make a diet* in English. To discuss this word in class, it would seem logical to include a few examples of usage and to point out what words combine naturally with *diet* in English so that accurate and effective communication can take place. When teaching, add a question: How do we use the word *diet*? One problem area for students involves words that have the same meaning but combine with different words. Students can often become frustrated when they are unable to use words logically. Take, for example, the words *toxic* and *poisonous*. Both have an identical meaning but they combine with different nouns. The question needs to be asked: What kinds of things are *toxic*? What kinds of things are *poisonous*? *Toxic* combines with chemicals, substances and fumes, while *poisonous* combines with snakes, drinks and potions. Teachers need to inform students that some words go together in English and some do not and that this has to be accepted as part of learning a second language.

Collocation improves writing

Second-language learners often produce language that is awkward and unnatural. One way of helping students to improve their writing is to get them to focus on this awkward language and to replace it with appropriate collocations. The following extracts were taken from TOEFL essays. While reviewing the essays, students were asked to think of collocations that would replace the underlined parts of the sentences with more natural language.

Topic: The most important aspect of a job is the money a person earns. Give reasons and examples to support your answer.

" People need jobs to get money for their wives and children." *earn a living for/support their families/*

" People work hard to change to a high position." *get/achieve/promotion/be promoted*

" One very important part of a job is that you are interested in it." *job satisfaction*

Topic: Write about the advantages and disadvantages of having a factory built in your neighborhood.

" Factories are helpful because they are places for people looking for a job. *they provide job opportunities*

" One problem with factories is that they dispose of chemicals which hurt the community *pollute the environment*

Writing can be improved by training students to consistently look for, and record, language patterns in context to increase their chances of acquiring meaningful language. Students need to be taught to identify useful collocates in reading and listening and record the language in context in collocation notebooks, or by creating vocabulary charts. These activities will dramatically improve the quality of their written language.

The following example of how to record vocabulary was taken from Jane Conzett's article, "Integrating collocation into a reading and writing course". (Teaching Collocation Further Developments in the Lexical Approach)

Word	**Special Context?**	**Collocations**
discretion (noun)	caution/privacy/ authority/judgement	at your/s.o.'s discretion vb: exercise/ handle sth with/use/leave sth to/show adj: complete/ total/utmost

Examples:

There are no service charges added to the bill. *Tip at your discretion.*

He handled the private matter *with complete discretion.*

The job applicants were hired *at the discretion of the manager.*

Collocation can help students surpass that intermediate plateau

Students often become discouraged at the upper-intermediate level. At the beginner level,

progress is often rapid. However, when they reach the upper intermediate level, what is required is not so much mastery of grammatical structure but improvement of collocation competence. Being able to use a wide range of collocations greatly improves what they can write and say. The ability to produce accurate and natural language makes students excited and eager to learn, boosts learner confidence and allows students to think quickly and communicate effectively.

Collocation improves rhythm and stress

When students memorize longer collocation patterns, they can also improve stress and intonation. This is much more effective than practising the stress and intonation of individual words because it makes language sound more natural. When native speakers listen to a play or a poetry reading of Shakespeare or Chaucer, they may not understand what every word or phrase means. However, if the actors or speakers can chunk the language correctly, it results in a general understanding of what is being said. Being able to produce a large number of collocations and longer patterns enables students to learn the stress patterns of whole phrases, and leads to better stress and intonation. Chunking language can be practised in the classroom by reading aloud and also by using songs and jazz chants.

Collocation equips students for the future

It should be stressed that learning a language is a never-ending process. Training students to notice, record and learn language habitually, as part of an ongoing learning strategy, will ensure that they continue to improve and enrich their language long after they have left the confines of the ESL classroom.

Implications of New Research

New research on collocation is beginning to have a profound effect on language teaching. There has been a shift away from exclusively structural methods. Current methodology is communicative/structural. The main proponent of this approach, Michael Lewis, has coined the term 'lexical approach' and written extensively and passionately about the vital role of collocation in the process of language acquisition.

Also resulting from the new research is an alternative learning / teaching paradigm: Observe / Hypothesize / Experiment. The so-called data-driven learning (DDL) seems to be attracting more and more interest among both teachers and students. DDL is a form of concordance-based learning.

Another important development is the inclusion of collocation in English language teaching materials. Some examples include: "Headway", "Landmark", "Advance Your English", "Vocabulary in Use" and "Cambridge Academic English" exam preparation materials.

In addition, two specialized collocation dictionaries are now available: "LTP Dictionary of English Collocations" and "Oxford Collocations Dictionary". Also, there is more emphasis on collocation in such standard dictionaries as "Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners" and "Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary".

Sample Activity

The following is a description of an activity, or more precisely, a series of collocation activities, inspired by the students' interest in a local issue. This series of activities took place over several days. In January 2002, there was a threat of a bus workers' strike in Ottawa. As many of the learners depend on public transportation to get to school, they were anxious to find out about the negotiations between OC Transpo and the transit employees' union.

First, the students read the article, 'Bus workers study final offer' in order to get a general idea of the situation. Then, they were asked to identify the words and collocations related to the topic of labour negotiations, which they looked up in dictionaries and discussed with the teacher. The students underlined the relevant words and phrases in the article. (In this article, we have done the underlining for the reader). The next day, the students first listened to a news item recorded from the local radio, and then, working in groups, reconstructed the information. The following day, the class read the editorial 'Bus workers: Take this deal', identified relevant vocabulary and discussed the city's contract offer. Based on the material they were already familiar with, the students, with the help of the teacher, made up the vocabulary chart 'Why strike?'. On the final day for this theme, the students wrote group reports on the Amalgamated Transit Union and the City of Ottawa negotiations.

The series of activities culminating in the production of the reports proved to be very successful. The step-by-step approach described above gave the students the opportunity to absorb and practise the very specific language of negotiation, and made it possible to discuss and write about the topic with confidence and remarkable accuracy. It must be emphasized, however, that such activities can neither be rushed nor condensed. Even advanced students are unable to process this amount of material in a short time. They were very proud of their work, and the teacher was very pleased with their efforts. From teaching perspective, it was a very rewarding experience.

Bus workers study 'final offer'

Vote to be held next week; rural bus contracts still at issue

BY KEVIN RITCHIE
AND JORDAN HEATH-RAWLINGS

There's no OC Transpo strike — at least not this week.

Bargaining teams from the two sides adjourned last night after the city gave the Amalgamated Transit Union its "final offer," which will ask its members to vote on it sometime next week. A date has not been set.

"It could be late next week," said André Cornellier, president of ATU local 279.

Many of the issues have been settled, including wages, but the two sides remain stuck on the question of contracting out jobs on five rural bus lines. As a result, ATU leaders are not recommending either for or against acceptance of the offer.

Mr. Cornellier said he was "sort of disappointed" the contracting out clause was not addressed in the city's new offer. "It's the biggest holdback," he said.

"If there had been significant changes in that part of the agreement," he added, "I certainly would recommend it to the membership."

"The city has tabled its final offer," said Rosemarie Leclair, the city's general manager of utilities and public works. "We're particularly pleased. We think we have addressed the issues."

Until the vote next week, buses and O-Trains will keep running.

"What we're saying is: Business as usual," said Mike Milloy, assistant business agent with the ATU. "We have a final offer from the city and we're bringing that to our people."

Mayor Bob Chiarelli said shortly before the marathon bargaining session ended that signals coming out of the meetings were good.

"The parties are at the table working in good faith and with reasonable prospects at this point," Mr. Chiarelli said.

If there's a strike, employers are expecting empty desks; schools and universities know students will miss classes; and city officials warn that striking union members might picket snowplow garages or other vital municipal sites not connected to busing.

On top of that, everyone knows traffic would be a mess, especially during rush hours — times when police hope some drivers will stay off the roads by working earlier or later than usual.

But the people most affected are the riders themselves.

Source: The Ottawa Citizen, January 29, 2003

EDITORIALS

Bus workers: Take this deal

Ottawa's bus drivers and mechanics should vote to accept the city's final contract offer, not only because it's reasonable, but because it's as far as we taxpayers can go in terms of guaranteeing union job security.

The deal, sketched out at the 11th hour, appears fair for the transit employees. It contains wage increases of three per cent in each year of a three-year contract. There are benefit improvements, such as better footwear, clothing and tool allowances, payment of apprenticeship fees and improved bereavement leave.

Nor is the city pushing hard to change the loose rules that allow some drivers to work so many overtime hours that they make six-figure incomes.

The city's final offer puts a bus operator's hourly wage at $22.17 an hour, before overtime and benefits, by 2005. Overall, the package should be good enough to persuade transit company employees to avoid jumping into a financially disastrous work stoppage.

What has proved contentious to the union is the lack of a guarantee that there will be no contracting out of transit service within Ottawa's boundaries. What the city is willing to guarantee is that there will be no Amalgamated Transit Union jobs lost because of contracting out. The union had sought a complete ban on contracting out.

But how could the city deliver on such a promise? When the old municipalities were merged into the new City of Ottawa in 2000, the city inherited large rural areas where private companies provided low cost transit for sparsely populated rural communities. To say these operations have to leave town would be unfair and unreasonable.

To say that the city can't hire contractors for service to outlying communities would ignore the simple fact that it makes no sense to send a large Transpo vehicle, driven by a driver who is trained and paid for heavy city traffic, into a rural hamlet where the passengers can be counted on the fingers of both hands.

To force an uneconomical service onto the rural areas would only turn the public against the unionized transit service.

Transpo's employees actually have a fair bit to cheer about. The company has hired about 400 employees over the last three years since amalgamation, not only because of retirements but also because the transit service has been expanding. Just Transpo's controversial expansion into the rural areas alone has created 14 new jobs. Last year, ridership grew by 2.3 per cent.

So when they scrutinize the details of the deal on Monday, and then vote, Transpo employees should consider that the offer is generous and that, even in an election year, there is a limit to what city councillors will do to avoid a messy public strike.

The city is offering to give the transit company's employees better money, and assurances that they'll continue to have work in a growing company that's buying new equipment each year. That's a good deal.

Ottawa Citizen

Source: The Ottawa Citizen, January 30, 2003

Vocabulary Chart
Why strike?

agreement	collective agreement
contract	bargaining team/committee
deal	the two sides/the parties
offer	contracting-out clause/provision
package	holdback/sticking point
benefits	membership/union members
strike	marathon bargaining session
agenda	union spokesman/spokesperson
clause/provision	benefit improvements
strike-breaker	footwear/clothing/tool allowance
	bereavement leave
	overtime hours
	financially disastrous work stoppage
	job losses

vote (on) / hold a vote (on)
address / settle / respond to an issue / a concern
be / remain stuck on the question of ...
bring an offer to the people / membership
be / sit at the negotiating table
negotiate / work in good faith
go on strike
picket s.th.
accept / reject an offer
seek a complete ban on (contracting out)
guarantee job security
hire contractors
scrutinize the details of the deal
maintain the right to...
sketch out the deal
give an offer / table an offer

A deal appears fair for the (transit employees).

It contains wage increases of 3 per cent in each year of the 3-year contract

The offer puts a bus operator's wage at $22 an hour before overtime and benefits.

There are benefit improvements.

What has proved contentious is ...

Reports on the ATU and the City of Ottawa negotiations

The ATU and the city have finished their contract negotiations. The city has given the union its final offer, which needs to be voted on next week. The union representative,

Mr. Cornellier, said that he was not pleased with the contracting-out clause and he considers it a serious holdback, so he wants the membership to vote on it.

Gilda and Maria

According to the latest news, OC Transpo drivers and mechanics are on the job today, but the strike is up in the air. The city gave its "final offer". It addresses all the concerns of the workers, like wages and benefits, but contracting out. Now the union is studying the offer and is going to vote on it. The day of the vote hasn't been set yet. The sticking point is the fact that the city maintains the right to contract out jobs in order to improve the delivery of services in a more economical and competitive way. The consequence of rejecting the final offer will be chaos in the city. Traffic will be a mess. Lots of students will miss classes and employees will have problems getting to their work places. It is not clear yet whether bus workers will go on strike or not.

Ayten, Irina and Jana

There may be a bus drivers' strike in the next few weeks if the Amalgamated Transit Union does not accept the final offer of the City of Ottawa. The marathon bargaining session finished yesterday without any agreement.

Although many of the issues have been settled, both parties are stuck on the rural bus lines issue. The final offer has addressed wages and benefits, but the contracting-out clause is a serious holdback at the moment. Until the membership vote, the buses and trains will keep on running. If the city's final offer is rejected, the bus and train operators' shrike [sic] will paralyze Ottawa, creating chaos and a mess in the city.

Ghada, Montse and Suborna

After the negotiations which took place earlier this week, an OC Transpo strike is not imminent. The bargaining teams adjourned their negotiations and now it is up to the union members to accept or reject the city's final offer. Most of the issues have been settled, including wages and benefits, but the parties remain stuck on the question of contracting out jobs. The ATU's spokesman is not satisfied with this offer and will not recommend it.

However, he says that it will be a union decision. The vote will be held at the end of next week. If this final offer is rejected, traffic will be a mess. It is said that more than 100,000 commuters depend on public transportation. This strike might affect the city's life.

Marcel and Sandu

For three days we were worried about how we would get to school because OC Transpo drivers had threatened to go on strike. Luckily, there is no strike. The City of Ottawa gave a final offer to the OC Transpo workers. The union is going to ask its members to vote on it next week.

The bargaining teams remain stuck on contracting out jobs on rural bus lines. The ATU leaders are not satisfied with the city's offer because it doesn't address this issue. But the city says that their offer addresses all the union concerns.

Next week the membership will decide if they accept or reject the final offer. We hope the parties will come to agreement and there will be no strike.

Ekaterina, Ranjith and Reinaldo

Conclusion

We hope that this article, which is based on the presentation that we gave at the Bridges to the Future TESL Ontario Conference in Toronto in November 2002, will prove useful and informative to teachers who have not yet been exposed to the idea of collocation. We have found that activities similar to the one included in the article have been very successful in practice. We have used a variety of topics, e.g. gun control, honesty, TV watching, globalization and SARS. In every case, the collocation-based approach resulted in a marked improvement in both the speaking and the writing of our students.

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Useful Web Sites

British National Corpus http://info.ox.ac.uk/bnc

COBUILD http://titania.cobuild.collins.co.uk/about.htm/

Tim John's Home Page http://web.bham.ac.uk/johnstf/

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Portfolio Assessment for ESL Writing

Hong Wang and Liying Cheng, Queen's University

Introduction

Assessment plays a central and important role in teaching and learning. It not only documents students' learning and progress but also improves and enhances their growth in learning, enabling them to reach the highest levels of achievement. There are two commonly used assessments: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced. A norm-referenced assessment is used to ascertain a student's status with respect to the performance of other students on the same assessment. A criterion-referenced assessment, on the other hand, is used to ascertain a student's status with respect to a defined assessment domain or standard.

In the past decade, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of portfolio assessment. A portfolio is used as an alternative or supplement to such traditional assessment tools as norm-referenced, standardized, multiple-choice tests. This alternative assessment activity compensates for traditional assessment practices. Portfolio assessment documents the process and the product of student learning; not only do students get feedback from their teachers, but they can also assess themselves and be assessed by their peers.

Definition of portfolio

Portfolios are widely used as a classroom assessment procedure in language arts, music, math, and many other disciplines. They have been gaining recognition in the field of ESL as the best assessment procedure for documenting students' growth over time (Brown, 2000). Portfolios "provide a way to collect and present a variety of performance data, creating a rich and comprehensive portrayal of each student's accomplishments" (Carpenter & Ray, 1995, p. 34). Portfolio definitions vary, but the most commonly accepted and used definition in our field is from Paulson, Paulson, and Meyer (1991) as it best reflects the purposes and goals of ESL teaching and learning:

> A portfolio is a *purposeful* collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievement in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting content, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student reflection. (p. 60)

Types vs. purposes of portfolios

The purpose of portfolio assessment is of primary importance. "Without a clear understanding of purpose, portfolios are likely to be indistinguishable from unorganized collections of materials" (Linn & Gronlund, 2000, p. 292). Arter, Spandel, and Culham (1995) identified two main purposes for creating portfolios of student work: assessment, and instruction. Assessment uses of portfolios involve keeping track of what students know and can do while instructional uses relate to promoting learning – students learn something from assembling the portfolio and learn to take responsibility for their learning. Since good assessment is an integral part of effective instruction, these two purposes should not be mutually exclusive (Linn & Gronlund, 2000, p. 293). It is essential to decide on purposes first and then to select the type of portfolio.

In the field of ESL, portfolios can document the most appropriate learning and growth in all language domains/skills, or can focus on progress made in a specific skill such as writing. For example, a writing portfolio can enable teachers to look at how students write using particular language modes, review student performance periodically, examine the nature of different writing tasks and/or distinguish the writing situations in which students are most successful, examine teaching strategies and assess performance, and develop insights into second- or foreign-language learning and into the activities most effective for language learners (Murphy & Smith, 1991, pp. 18-19).

Linn and Gronlund (2000, p. 294) have classified portfolios into four types, based on purpose: ESL teachers can select one or a combination of portfolio types.

Four dimensions distinguishing the purposes of portfolios

instruction		**assessment**
(help students develop and refine self-evaluation skills)	«	(formative: to guide, give feedback and promote the desired learning; summative: to evaluate and judge the quality of student's work)
current accomplishments		progress
(include finished work and cover a brief period of time)	«	(include multiple versions of a single piece of work)
best work showcase		documentation
(contain student-selected best work that students have done)	«	(provide evidence about breadth and depth of learning, and be inclusive)
finished		working
(completed work for summative evaluation)	«	(document day-to-day activities and useful for formative evaluation)

Portfolio entries

The next stage of portfolio assessment is to decide what and how many entries an ESL writing portfolio should include. When portfolios are employed in writing, it is important to note that the strength depends on students' involvement in the selection of portfolio entries. This means that teachers first offer guidelines based on the purposes of the portfolio and the learning goals established for the ESL class and then students collect and include what they choose. We suggest that ESL writing portfolios can include the following items (for each term/semester) based on the students' L2 proficiency.

1. Table of contents: Including the title and the category of each portfolio entry, content area for which the piece is written, and the page number in the portfolio.
2. Diagnostic self-evaluation: Writing one-page reflections at both the beginning and the end of the term.
3. Reflection of reading logs: Writing and submitting one log each month according to what students have read from newspapers, journal articles, short stories, novels, etc.
4. Personal expressive writings: Writing two pieces from each category in the form of (a) personal narrative focusing on events in a student's life; and (b) a personal essay focusing on a central idea supported by the student's life experience.
5. Literary writing: Writing one piece from each category in the form of a short story, poem, script, and play.
6. Academic genres of writing: Writing two compositions of about 250 words each in the following 3 categories: narration, exposition, and argumentation.
7. Practical letter writing (optional entry): Writing a letter of about 250 words to a friend describing how he/she gets to a recommended place via train, introducing the most attractive scenic spots in the city and a plan for his/her visit (suggested specification).

Marking of portfolios

The marking of portfolios is the next stage in the process. Involving students in both self- and peer-assessment while compiling their portfolio is highly important; this helps students understand the learning goals better, and negotiate and define their learning. Rolheiser et al. (2000) claim that "self-evaluation is key to ownership of learning and the continuous improvement of professional practice. In particular, positive self-evaluation can encourage you [students] to set higher goals and to continue to devote personal effort toward achieving those goals" (p. 124). By reflecting on their own

learning, students begin to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their work. These weaknesses then become improvement goals. As well, self-evaluation serves as a summary reflection, which aims to review each student's goals, identify how students grow as a result of the portfolio practice, and to articulate future goals (Rolheiser et al., 2000). A sample self-evaluation form is presented below:

Student self-evaluation of writing

1. What is the strength of this piece?
2. What is the weakness of this piece?
3. What did I learn while writing this piece?
4. What would I do differently if I were to write this again?
5. What was the most difficult aspect of writing this piece?
6. How would I rank this piece on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest)?
7. Whom did I ask to read this writing?
8. What suggestions did he or she make? Were they helpful or not? Why?

In addition to self-evaluation, peer assessment can also be included in the writing portfolio. It provides students with a form for receiving feedback from classmates and may also help develop their critical thinking skills (see sample form below):

Responding to peer writing

Student: _____

Title of writing: _____

Reader: _____

Date: _____

1. What is the strength of this piece?
2. Does the beginning attract your attention?
3. Does the writer provide evidence to support what is claimed?
4. Is the supporting detail effective in supporting the writer's point?
5. Are there any parts you had difficulty understanding?
6. What would you suggest that would improve the writing?

Finally comes the teacher's evaluation of the writing, which, together with students' self-evaluation and peer assessment, are effective in promoting improvements in students' work. Among the entries in the writing portfolio, teachers can use a checklist to ensure that required items are included. The following rating scale or scoring rubric can be used to mark essays (Wilson, 1996, p. 52-53).

Excellent (5):

Focus:
- Says something new about the topic insight)
- Remains on topic throughout
- States main idea and three supporting ideas in introduction
- Relates conclusion directly to main idea

Support: Examples, reasons and explanations are relevant, accurate, convincing, sufficient (but concise), specific

Organization:
- Has effective introduction, body and conclusion
- Has unified paragraphs with topic, supporting, concluding sentences
- Paragraphs flow from one to the next and sentences are linked within the paragraph

Style:
- Excellent sentence variety
- Excellent vocabulary: varied, accurate
- Formal level of language

Mechanics:
- No major errors
- Two or three minor errors

Well developed (4):

Focus:
- Says something about the topic (insight)
- Remains on topic throughout
- States main idea and three supporting ideas in introduction
- Relates conclusion only vaguely to main idea

Support: Examples, reasons and explanations are relevant (throughout), accurate, reasonably convincing, reasonably sufficient

Organization: • Has introduction, body and conclusion

? Paragraphs are unified with topic, supporting, concluding sentences

? Some body paragraphs do not flow into the next paragraph or do not have linked sentences within

Style: • Good sentence variety

• Good vocabulary: varied, accurate for most part

• Formal level of language

Mechanics: • One or two major errors

• No more than three minor errors

Acceptable (3):

Focus: • Remains on topic

• States main idea only indirectly

• Relates three supporting ideas only adequately

Support: Examples, reasons and explanations are partially relevant, appropriate, primarily accurate, developed unsatisfactorily

Organization: • Has introduction, body and conclusion

• Has topic sentence and some supporting sentences

• Some attempt to connect paragraphs and to make connections within the paragraph

Style: • Attempted sentence variety

• Attempted variety, and accuracy in vocabulary

• Formal level of language generally

Mechanics: • No more than three major errors

• Excessive minor errors

Partially formed (2):

Focus: • Remains partially on topic

• Develops inadequately supporting ideas

Support: Examples, reasons and explanations are somewhat relevant, repetitious, generally inaccurate, undeveloped

Organization: • Attempts introduction

• Weak body paragraph

• Attempts conclusion

Style: • Colloquial or slang mixed with formal language

• Weak vocabulary

Mechanics: • Four or five major errors

• Excessive minor errors

Undeveloped, unclear (1):

Focus: • Relates ideas to topic superficially

• Develops ideas randomly, disjointedly

Support: Examples, reasons and explanations are vaguely relevant, very repetitious, mainly inaccurate, unconvincing, illogical

Organization: • No introduction

• Minimal evidence of paragraphing

• No conclusion

Style: • Level of language too informal

• Vague vocabulary

Mechanics: • More than five major errors

• Numerous minor errors

Communicating portfolio results

When students' portfolios are completed, teachers can take the opportunity to use the portfolios as a means to communicate with students, or parents. In a class meeting, students can display and share their portfolios with their classmates (Tierney et al., 1991), and learn from each other. Portfolios also offer an excellent means for parents to have "a more intimate basis for seeing aspects of their children's experiences in school," as they provide a framework for meaningful discussion of the students' achievements, progress and future goals (Linn & Gronlund, 2000, p. 311). In this way, portfolios invite parents to be actively involved in their children's education.

In sum, portfolios can be an effective tool of assessment, especially in writing class, as they can best document learning and growth over a period

of time and can demonstrate to ESL learners what they can achieve and have already achieved in their learning.

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Individualism and Collectivism in ESL/EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

The individualism-collectivism syndrome has considerable impact on many aspects of a society. Based on theoretical frameworks, classroom observations, and teaching and learning experiences in ESL/EFL classrooms, this study investigates the cultural orientations in L2 settings where classroom interaction and discourse, the goal of education, and the roles that teachers and students play, are unfolded. It is suggested that a better understanding of the syndrome will create a desirable rapport between the teacher and the learner.

Introduction

Cross-cultural studies over the past 20 years have shed new light on the concepts of individualism and collectivism. The individualism-collectivism syndrome has been the focus of a great deal of research ever since and has been considered a primary point of analysis for the most basic understanding of a culture (Triandis et al., 1988). It has been recognized that individualism is closely related to the United States and English-speaking countries, in general, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Western Europe. Collectivism, in contrast, is found in much of Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, South America, Central America, and the Pacific Islands. It seems that individualism more often than not refers to capitalist countries and that collectivism has more connection with socialists. However, the case of Japan, and some other capitalist countries, demonstrates that even capitalist countries may be highly collectivist in nature.

As has been acknowledged, much research has been done on the definition of individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1991; Triandis, 1995), the difference and advantage-disadvantage comparison (Hofstede, 1991, 1997; Triandis, 1995), and the applications of the concept in understanding the behaviour patterns in business operations (Chiu & Kosinski, 1995; Hofstede, 1991, 1997). However, little attention has been paid to the impact of the individualism-collectivism syndrome on ESL/EFL teaching and learning at the tertiary level in the ESL context, in general, and in the EFL context, in particular, where different beliefs and ideology enable students from diverse cultural backgrounds to behave differently. And, this, undoubtedly, poses various problems, sometimes causes conflict and further presents a challenge to language practitioners in the L2 or FL classroom.

As constructs, individualism and collectivism are related to many aspects of society. In this paper, I intend to explore the following features of this syndrome: (1) What are the concepts of individualism and collectivism? And what are the strengths and weaknesses of each? (2) What are the influences of individualism and collectivism on the culture of school where different values and beliefs are revealed in students' classroom interaction and discourse? (3) How does the individualism-collectivism syndrome affect students' expectations about the goals of education and the roles teachers and students play? And what are the implications, particularly for language teaching and learning at the tertiary level, in the ESL/EFL contexts?

It is expected that the study of the noticeable differences between individualism and collectivism will offer valuable insights into the understanding of the behaviour of students from different cultural backgrounds and further assist language teachers in their instruction in both ESL and EFL contexts.

Concepts of individualism and collectivism

According to the dictionaries of Western sources, individualism refers to "a theory that individual freedom is as important as the welfare of the community or group as a whole" and collectivism means "the control of the production of goods and services, and the distribution of wealth, by people as a group or by a government" (Canadian Dictionary of the English Language, 1998, p. 693). Likewise, individualism is "the doctrine that individual freedom in economic enterprise should not

be restricted by government or social regulation" (Neufeldt et al., 1988, p. 688), or is the "belief in the primary importance of the individual and in the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence" (Canadian Dictionary of the English Language, 1998, p. 693). Collectivism in both the Webster's and the Canadian Dictionary of the English Language refers to "the principles or system of ownership and control of the means of production and distribution by the people collectively".

In terms of the definitions from dictionaries of Eastern and more socialist sources, individualism means "a wrong ideology in which individual interests prevail over collective interests. Under this doctrine, individuals think and act from an individualistic perspective and are therefore only concerned about themselves and not others" (Dictionary Editing Team of Language Research Center in Chinese Social and Scientific Institute, 1994, p. 426). As well, individualism is the offspring of private ownership of production means, and it is also the core of bourgeois world outlook. It has several forms, such as individualistic heroism, liberalism, and selfish departmentalism (p. 426). Collectivism, on the other hand, means "an ideology in which collective interests prevail over individual interests and is the basic spirit of socialism and communism" (p. 593, both translated by the author from Chinese to English). From the above definitions, it can be observed that both individualism and collectivism may refer to considerably different doctrines, depending on the perspectives. It is expected to have an either positive or negative connotation from capitalist societies such as the United States and Canada or from socialist countries like China and Vietnam. This connotation of collectivism "serving the people and others in contrast to putting personal interest above anything else" in individualism is what is greatly recommended in the spirit of socialist morality (Yu, 1984, p. 34). It is no wonder that individualism, considered a wrong ideology, has not been advocated and promoted at all in China, which may imply that the strong advocating of individualism may lead ordinary people to selfishness, thinking only about themselves.

In addition to the definitions from dictionaries bearing different colours of either capitalist or socialist preference, many researchers have attempted to give them their own interpretations. Hofstede (1991) contended that individualism and collectivism can be defined as follows:

> Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (p. 51).

And Triandis (1995) in his research on the various aspects of individualism and collectivism claimed that individualism is:

> ... a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collective; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others; and emphasize rational analyses of the advantages and disadvantages to associating with others (p. 2).

To him, collectivism can be defined as:

> ... a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives (family, co-workers, tribe, nation); are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals; and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives (p. 2).

It can be obviously seen that researchers define individualism and collectivism from many perspectives, looking at them from their operations in the societies, such as from the relationship between people, or from its ideological construct, or from the roles people perform in society. In fact, individualism and collectivism have been defined from so many different perspectives that all these perspectives function in one way or another to explain and further investigate people's behaviours in the society in which they live and work.

Triandis (1995) summarized the findings of many researchers on the advantages and disadvantages of individualism and collectivism. He posited that individualism has the following strengths: human rights can be observed, multiculturalism is possible in society, democracy can be respected, and justice practised. Also, he mentioned that individualism emphasizes creativity, freedom, mastery, and achievement. Most important of all,

individuals in society insist on equal treatment under the law. The weakness of individualism, to him, however, lies in the considerable social problems that emerge; for instance, high probabilities of family conflict and divorce, loneliness, insecurity, violence in the streets, delinquency and crime. Alienation and narcissism are also linked with individualism.

The merits of collectivism, Triandis (1995) contended, were that morality is highly respected and practised, and that homicide, drug abuse, divorce and suicide rates are low. The demerits of collectivism lie in the fact that people tend to be compliant, and that children raised from collectivistic culture lack high self-esteem, and are thus not inclined to be innovative and creative. More seriously, in collectivist societies, human rights and democracy are neither respected nor practised.

From what has been demonstrated, it appears that both individualism and collectivism have their respective values with regard to different aspects of social life in either an individualist or collectivist country. However, media often highlight contradictions in the individualism-collectivism syndrome. For example, in India, in the early 1980s, New Delhi newspapers reported that there were 200 criminal investigations per year of cases in which a woman was killed, usually in a kitchen accident involving her mother-in-law. The suspected motive was to make it possible for the husband to remarry and get another dowry (cited in Triandis, 1995). In the United States, where human rights and equality are believed to be respected, there is still inequality and racial discrimination. James and Farmer (1993) mapped some of the contemporary battlefields in higher education where African-American women teachers and administrators fight against "racism, sexism, homophobia and class-based elitism" (p. xi) in White-dominated academia. The so-called equality, in reality, is nothing but a dream for many minorities such as Blacks.

Individualism and collectivism in the school context

According to research conducted in both Western and Eastern academia, social, political, and economic impacts have essentially informed what is designated as individualism and collectivism (Blecher, 1995; Hu & Grove, 1999; Kim, 1994; Kim et al., 1994; White, 1995). As well, the cultural distinction between the two is one of the significant factors that affect students' adjustment from home to school (Yamauchi, 1998, p. 189). In fact, the cultural orientations of societies have direct and indirect influences on classroom interaction and discourse, on the goals of education, and on the roles that teachers and students play in the whole teaching and learning process.

Cultural influences on classroom interaction and discourse

Culture refers to the set of ideas, beliefs, assumptions, and norms that are widely shared among a group of people and that serve to guide their behaviour (Goodenough, 1973). Students from different cultural backgrounds interact and communicate differently, based on the norms they were taught from their home cultures. And, this inherited and learned cultural behaviour is unconsciously revealed in the ESL/FL classroom.

Yamauchi (1998) claimed that the discourse patterns that exist in a classroom setting may characterize it as more individualistic or collectivistic. Hofstede (1997) also believed that the relationship between the individual and the group can be highly visible in classroom behaviour (p. 61). The classroom context of a more collectivistic culture encourages co-narrative discourse in which it is appropriate for more than one person to speak at a time. For example, English language teachers in Vietnam allow their students to call out answers to their questions simultaneously rather than insisting on individual turn-taking directed by the teacher (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996). In contrast, in a more individualistic classroom setting, discourse focuses on sole narration and the individual expression of one's opinions and differences (Yamauchi, 1998). One of the reasons for this sharp contrast is that most collectivist cultures maintain large power distances and their education tends to be teacher-centred with little two-way communication (Hofstede, 1997, p. 62).

Since collectivism highly values harmony among the members of the in-groups, showing humility and being humble when interacting in different situations, students may not want to cause conflict by appearing smarter or in other ways superior to others in the group (Yamauchi, 1998). Thus, students try to "build on each other's responses" in "collaborative ways", and, as a result the atmosphere is not one of individual competitiveness, but of "collaboration of the group as a whole" (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996, p. 203). If, by chance, some do reveal their smartness by being aggressive and

ambitious or showing off, the consequences might be the exclusion or alienation from the in-groups. Moreover, "in the collectivist classroom, the virtues of harmony and the maintenance of 'face' reign supreme. Confrontations and conflicts should be avoided, or at least formulated so as not to hurt anyone; even students should not lose face if this can be avoided" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 62). Hofstede further mentioned that teachers from collectivist cultures at all times treat their students as part of an in-group, never as an isolated individual. On the other hand, in the individualist classroom, students expect to be treated impartially as individuals, regardless of their background. Consequently, group formation among students is much more *ad hoc*, usually according to the task assigned by the instructor. Open discussions are common practice and face-consciousness is weak or nonexistent (pp. 62-63). Therefore, this different cultural inclination in terms of interaction and discourse from individualist and collectivist societies, impacts on student behaviour in the classroom.

Cultural influences on the goals of education

The goal of education is perceived differently between the individualist and the collectivist society. Hofstede (1997) posited that individualist society aims at preparing the individual for a place in society, which means learning to cope with new, unknown, or unforeseen situations. He reinforced, "There is a basically positive attitude towards what is new. The purpose of learning is less to know how to do, as to know *how to learn*. ... The individualist society in its school tries to provide the skills necessary for 'modern man'" (original italics, p. 63). In the collectivist society, "there is a stress on adaptation to the skills and virtues necessary to be an acceptable group member. ... Learning is more often seen as a one-time process, reserved for the young only, who have to learn *how to do* things in order to participate in society" (original italics, p. 63). As well, Scollon (1999), employed an ethnographic approach to classroom interaction between teachers and students to illustrate the cultural constructs that underlie the views on education goals in both Chinese and Western classrooms. She also explores the cultural assumptions that affect the learning processes to the philosophical precepts stemming from the teachings of Socrates and Confucius. Scollon believes that the Socratic method of education is the basis for many daily activities in the Western classroom and emphasizes the art of rhetoric as a search for knowledge and education. In her view, this focus differs considerably from Confucian educational philosophy, in which rhetorical reasoning is secondary, and the primary goal is to gain wisdom and act in accordance with the moral code that the teacher communicates to the student (cited in Hinkel, 1999, p. 10). Furthermore, Scollon (1999) emphasized that achieving the goals of Confucian philosophy is paramount for Chinese students operating in their first or foreign language learning process, which is not necessarily shared in the Anglo-American Socratic teaching and learning tradition.

Cultural influences on the roles of teachers and students

Individual-centred and collective-centred cultures contrast sharply in their perception of the roles teachers and students play in the language. Whereas individualistic-oriented culture regards teachers as facilitators, organizers, and mentors, collectivistic-oriented culture perceives teachers as sages in ancient China and knowledgeable modern-day scholars who are supposed to know all the answers to the questions asked in class. This huge difference in the expectations of students from different cultural orientations often makes it difficult for ESL instructors to meet the needs of those students from collectivistic cultures. For example, "in Vietnam, a country where people are deeply aware of their Confucian heritage, tradition dictates that teachers are honoured and respected, even moreso than one's parents. The teacher guides the students not only in academic matters, but also in moral behaviour" (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996, p. 206). To a certain extent, teachers not only are teachers, but should also act as parents and sometimes, friends. In this way, students rely more on teachers than on their parents. This traditional and unique role of teachers in Vietnam instill moral behaviour and remind students to value group harmony and respect others is the same as that of Chinese teachers where Confucian heritage is greatly valued and highly appreciated.

The fact that students depend so much on teachers results in another phenomenon in the Chinese EFL tertiary classroom in which teachers mainly function as active knowledge transmitters and students as passive knowledge receivers. Cortazzi and Jin (1996) conducted research in 1993, asking 15 highly experienced Western teachers of English from Britain, North America and

Australia, who had worked in Chinese universities, about the strong and weak points of Chinese students' learning styles. According to the report, these native English speakers unanimous agreed that, on the positive side, Chinese students were diligent, persistent, thorough, and friendly. They were very good at memorizing and were a joy to teach (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, pp. 184-185). However, they also identified this group's passive participation in the language classroom. These teachers attempted to use communicative methods in the classroom, but felt disappointed. They found that the difference in the beliefs about teaching and learning resulted in the Chinese learners' weakness in communicating orally and in writing, and inactivity in class. In the eyes of these teachers, Chinese students went to the classroom not to participate, but to passively listen to what teachers were talking about. They discovered that Chinese students "expect the teacher to instruct them from the front of the class while they listen and remember in what basically is a transmission model of learning: knowledge comes from the teacher, is retained by the student and returned in exams or assignments" (p. 189). However, as far as Chinese students were concerned, teachers should be profoundly knowledgeable, erudite, learned, and able to answer all questions. And, it is the teacher, not the students, who should lecture the whole time in the classroom, as they go to school to acquire knowledge, not the other way round.

Implications and conclusion

At first sight, Western individualism and Eastern collectivism seem dichotomous in many aspects. In essence, they indeed differ from each other in their shared ideology, value orientation, priority of interests, relationship between people in society, specifically, in the workplace, in school. Alternatively, however, they should be complementary and treated as a different dimension of a continuum. From the description and discussion above of individualism-collectivism syndrome, it is clear that each has its merits and demerits and that each contributes to the development of its society in which a certain cultural orientation prevails. Besides, there is a tendency that individualist society embraces collectivism, in which team work and cooperation is advocated. Meanwhile, collectivist society is marching towards individualism, where adequate competition is promoted and learner autonomy is highly encouraged (Ho & Crookall, 1995; Littlewood, 1999; Nelson, 1995). All this indicates that the optimal choice in any society may not be the extreme of either, but rather that integrating individualism into collectivism or vice versa provides each unique society with an opportunity to incorporate and benefit from advantages and avoid disadvantages that each ideology embraces.

In ESL and EFL school contexts, a clear and better understanding of individualism and collectivism will enable both ESL and EFL practitioners to cope more confidently with their teaching and learning situations. Consequently, less conflict and more cooperation might be expected between the teacher and the learner, and, as a result, a desirable rapport would be established. Particularly in the ESL classroom, where individualism prevails, teacher educators may attempt to conduct classroom activities based on collectivistic culture and incorporate them so that students can learn step by step to adjust to more individualistic ones, that is, to help students learn to play the game. In the EFL classroom, on the other hand, Western ESL teachers of Asian students all too frequently feel frustrated because they do not get the feedback they are accustomed to, not only in terms of comments and questions, but also in head movement and facial expression (Scollon, 1999, p. 27). In this case, they need to adjust their teaching methodology to meet the needs of their ESL students in the EFL setting. To start with, they may attempt to employ pair work or group work to get students motivated and interested in language-learning practice. Then, open discussion and presentation might follow to ensure that students spare no efforts in attaining their educational goals through the individualistic-oriented classroom tasks assigned.

Just as Yamauchi (1998) pointed out that students, whose home cultures differ from the culture of their schools, must make radical adjustments as they cross between these two worlds, students from more collectivistic cultural backgrounds may feel uncomfortable "to speak up, to stand out, and to compete with one another" (p. 196). At this point, teacher educators bear the responsibility of collaborating with their students to discuss concerns and expectations from individualistic and collectivistic orientations to help them in their timely adjustments. Furthermore, "educators should think ahead to ways in which they can capitalize on students' preferences and tendencies, but also plan for ways to expand and extend these repertoires of expectations and behaviours" (Yamauchi, 1998, p. 196).

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Downside Up: An Australian View of ESL Curriculum K-6

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NSW Department of Education & Training

The New South Wales Department of Education and Training is responsible for all public primary (K-6) and secondary (7-12) schools in the state. Unlike Ontario, all teachers in NSW government schools are employees of the department. There are no self-governing school boards and the 40 district offices are responsible for supporting schools and teachers in implementing programs, curriculum and projects, with most routine administrative and policy roles taken up by state office units.

In 2002, there were just fewer than 200,000 students enrolled in NSW government schools from approximately 50 Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE) representing about 25% of the total enrolment in state primary and secondary schools. Of this number, about 125,000 students have been identified by their schools as needing continuing ESL support. Approximately 85,000 of these students received targeted assistance through the 876 (full-time equivalent) ESL teaching positions allocated on the basis of relative need.

Of these totals, primary (K-6) schools reported some 110,000 LBOTE students, of whom 85,000 needed continuing ESL support with 66,000 receiving assistance from 610 (FTE) ESL teaching positions.

External Testing

Syllabi are developed by the Board of Studies, which is a statutory authority independent of the department, but accountable to the Minister for Education. The Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations at the end of Year 12 are set and marked under the board's direction. This would be the equivalent of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. The board also conducts a series of tests at the end of Year 10, in English-literacy, Mathematics, Science, Australian History, Geography, and Civics and Citizenship as part of the requirements for the School Certificate (SC).

Students participate in wide-scale testing in literacy and numeracy in Year 3, Year 5 and Year 7, with Year 8 an option for interested schools. Writing components of literacy tests are marked against a rubric linked to related syllabus outcomes, as are extended responses in the numeracy tests. Other items are mostly multiple choice questions. Results are reported in performance bands. A test for computer knowledge and skills is scheduled to be piloted shortly.

ESL Steps: ESL Curriculum Framework K-6

In 1998, the Board of Studies released the *English K-6 syllabus* and support documents. These materials are influenced by a functional or social view of language and literacy, and identify a number of genres or text types relevant to K-6 key learning areas.

In 1994, *ESL Scales* was published by the Curriculum Corporation as a set of standards to use in measuring achievement in ESL language and literacy development. This was one of the first outcomes-based documents in NSW, and many teachers found it somewhat difficult to access.

As part of the Department's State Literacy Strategy, *ESL Steps* was developed as a planning and programming resource, linking *ESL Scales* to *English K-6 Syllabus*. This has given ESL teachers and their classroom colleagues common ground for collaborating to meet the language and literacy learning needs of their ESL students while ensuring that syllabus outcomes are being addressed.

ESL Steps is presented in four booklets, each representing a stage of learning. Within each Stage book, language processes of describing, recounting, responding, instructing, explaining, persuad-

ing and negotiating, adapted from Knapp & Watkins (1994), are used as organizers and correlate reasonably well with the products (text types) of the *English K-6 Syllabus*. The Stage books provide the meeting ground where ESL and classroom programs can both find familiar content.

Broad outcomes (ESL steps) and related finer details (language elements) support ESL teachers in developing objectives for their programs, and suggested activities guide them in planning their ESL-focused teaching sequences. Activities reflect a commitment to scaffolding ESL learning. Activities at Controlled Support level are designed to ensure that target language is noticed. At Guided Support level, students are asked to practise target language, and at Independent Support level, to use it.

Programming Considerations

In suggesting a programming model to ESL teachers, I have been influenced by the process used in the Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner, which, I believe, has its roots in the Backward Design model developed by McTighe & Wiggins (1998). This adaptation presumes that an ESL program will start with the content and the assessments for the unit being supported. Core content is agreed upon, the language demands identified and ESL proficiency levels assessed. Accommodations and modifications to assessment opportunities are determined and separate and/or concurrent measures of ESL development are established. ESL focused activities are sequenced through appropriate support levels to provide the language needed for ESL students to demonstrate their understanding, knowledge and skills related to the unit.

Conclusion

The cross-curriculum literacy focus of the *English K-6 Syllabus* has provided the foundation for the framework of *ESL Steps*. Focusing on language processes rather than language products (texts) has resulted in a more flexible, more coherent approach to supporting class program content. The adaptation of the backward design model suggested for programming (and borrowed from Ontario) helps teachers of ESL students know where they are taking the students, how they'll know they're going in the right direction, and when they've got there – in short, to be more accountable.

To reciprocate, I hope that some of you may translate principles that we have built into these draft teaching guides into an even better way of planning ESL teaching sequences for the TESL in Ontario schools.

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Content Focused ESL Assessment Plan

KLA: **Eng Math HSIE S&T PDHPE CAPA** Stage: **ES1 S1 S2 S3**

Topic/Theme/Unit: **Daily Decisions** Grade:**4** Class:**4/5M**

KLA Assessment: (Description of culminating task/s):

- Collect a research assignment on 'diseases' to include in portfolio.

KLA Outcomes:

- PHS2.12: Discusses the factors influencing personal health choices.
- DMS2.2: Makes decisions as an individual and as a group member.
- V4: Accepts responsibility for personal and community health.

English K-6 Outcomes:

Key KLA Content: (From syllabus: content overview; scope and sequence):

- Decision making process; influences on decision making; taking responsibility for one's own decisions
- Effects of pollution; Individual/group responsibility
- Disease prevention

Language & Literacy Demands:

- Structure of texts that describe, texts that explain
- Related grammatical points: nominalisation, present tense, passive voice
- Technical vocabulary

Suggested ESL accommodations & modifications:

Band	*Students*	*Possible accommodations & modifications*
A1	Maria	• Some or all of research assignment completed in home language. • Assignment presented as graphic with labels. Information drawn in matrix.
A2	Youssef Sofia Arash Deepak Young Angela	• Provide partially-completed proforma to organise information – text and pictures. • Make available word lists developed during discussion of topic.
B	Mohammed Xiao Po Ying Natalie	• Additional time if required. • Access to word lists, notes, dictionaries.

***ESL Steps* Language Focus Area/s:** Describing, Explaining, Persuading

ESL Scales outcomes/indicators

Band	*Ref.*	*Description*
A1	2.4	• Uses some basic communication and learning strategies to participate in everyday and class routines.
	1.5	• Gains and shares meaning from hearing and reading short simple texts in structured reading activities.
	1.10	• Draws on prior knowledge of writing, demonstrating understanding that the purpose of writing is to communicate messages.
A2	4.3	• Responds to spoken English appropriately in predictable situations, and adapts available English repertoire to make expanded utterances.
	3.8	• Uses knowledge of basic English vocabulary, structure and sound/symbol cues to make sense of unfamiliar texts.
	3.11	• Writes a variety of simple cohesive texts, demonstrating a developing use of simple language and structures.
B	6.3	• Interprets and creates spoken texts in ways that show a developing control over subject specific registers.
	5.8	• Applies basic text access strategies to enhance comprehension and learning.
	5.9	• Communicates on a range of familiar topics & incorporates language and ideas drawn from different sources in response to the varying demands of the classroom.

ESL Assessment Plan: PDHPE: Stage 2: Daily Decisions

Activity (sub-tasks)	Format	Skills/Knowledge (content) assessed	O	R	W	KLA	ESL	Collecting/ Recording Tools
Controlled/Guided: Present sample problem and work through decision making process (p224, dot point 2; PDHPE Modules). Students sequence steps, then match to elements of a new problem.	Group	• Knowledge of decision making process	X	X		DMS 2.2		Student worksheets; student self assessment.
		• Understand instructions; interact with small group	X				2.4; 4.3; 6.3	Teacher observation sheets
Controlled/Guided: Healthy diet pyramid presented; food pictures (p224-dot point 2) with labels. *Independent:* after modelling, enter daily food intake in journal (p225-dot 5, PDHPE Modules)	Class Group Individual	• Familiar with components of a healthy diet	X	X	X	PHS 2.12		Chart of pyramid; student journals
		• Participate in discussion; makes journal entries	X	X	X		1.5; 4.3; 5.9	Teacher observation sheets; student journals
Controlled/Guided: PDHPE Modules (p226, dot point 4) – Joint construction of lists & class letter seeking brochures.	Class	• Aware of effective personal hygiene habits	X		X	V4		Teacher observation schedules
		• Contribute to discussion & joint construction	X		X		2.4; 4.3; 6.3	
Controlled/Guided/ Independent: PDHPE Modules (p227, dot point 3 under *Environmental Health*). Omit letter to council. Identify types of pollution & effect on health.	Groups	• Effects of pollution on health	X	X		V4; DMS 2.2		Group recording sheet; teacher observation schedules
		• Participate in group discussions	X				1.5; 4.3; 5.9; 1.5; 3.8; 5.8	Teacher observation sheets; Student self assessment forms
		• Extract information from variety of texts.	X	X	X			Group research notes; Student self/ peer assessment forms
Controlled/Guided: PDHPE Modules (p228, dot point 4). Body's outer defences against infection.Class;	Groups	• Natural defences for disease prevention	X	X	X	PHS 2.12 V4		Teacher observation sheets; Group recording sheets
		• Participate in group discussion	X				2.4; 4.3; 6.3; 1.10; 3.11; 5.9	
		• Record information by labelling diagrams	X	X	X			

Controlled/Guided: PDHPE Modules, p228, dot point 3. Group research a disease.Class;	Groups	• Disease prevention	X X X	All		Group report
		• Participate in group construction of report	X X X	PDH PE	All ESL	Teacher observations; Student self/ peer assessment sheets
Independent: Collect a research assignment on 'diseases' to include in portfolio.	Individual	• Effects of pollution on health; responsibility for decisions; disease prevention	X X	All PDH PE		Completed student assignment
		• Locate and extract information from texts	X X		1.5; 3.8; 5.8; 1.10; 3.11; 5.9	Student research notes; self assessment
		• Compose appropriate text	X			Completed assignment

Much of this could be recorded on a copy of the unit, highlighting activities to be undertaken and identifying assessment opportunities using symbols, etc. This proforma is a guide only.

Dual aim: improve ESL students' opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills in KLAs; and assess their progress in developing English language skills.

Advantages: relates better to rest of students' school day; enables dialogue with class teachers; part of DET agenda (COSA, CTJ, SWA, etc); provides focus and direction for ESL program; potential to improve ESL student outcomes in KLAs; increase general awareness of ESL student needs

Implications: greater accountability for ESL programs and teachers; need for whole school approaches to ESL education; collaborative planning and teaching; class teachers aware of ESL issues and methodology.

This proforma could represent the documentation of the discussions that class teachers and ESL teachers might need to engage in. It needs to be more a program, although it could be the framework of one. Also, there is not enough information (performance criteria, etc) to be a task; it is not necessarily for teachers to use as part of documenting their planning, but as a guide to the sorts of issues they may have to engage with. I've told one group of teachers that the kind of scribbled notes they make in developing their program does NOT have to be transcribed onto this format. Instead it REPLACES the proforma.

It started out as a template for presenting an assessment plan for a unit of work for colleagues to critique and reshape, probably in some online environment. The inclusion of student names makes it appear a bit more classroom-based and more program-like.

Comments, criticisms and suggestions are all truly welcomed. This represents the consolidation of my thinking about ESL assessment at that point in time.

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Academic Reading Strategies: When the Train Has Left the Station

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Abstract

This paper describes an innovative academic reading course for M.Sc. and Doctoral candidates studying in French, who are overwhelmed by an immediate need to comprehend a large volume of subject-specific material in English. This hands-on case study focuses on the strategies that provided a highly effective solution for graduate students at HEC Montréal without adding to their academic workloads.

Introduction

Reading in a second/foreign language can be the most challenging of the four language skills. Since a written text does not allow for feedback from the writer (as is usually the case in discourse where the listener can ask questions), readers are left to make sense of the material they are reading. Many L2 students in graduate programs are frustrated due to the time it takes to understand required texts. And, the level of frustration increases with the volume and complexity of the text material they encounter. Such is the case of the graduate students who were the subject of this case study.

In academic circles, and, particularly in graduate studies and research, English reading material plays an essential role. HEC Montréal, an institution affiliated with l'Université de Montréal, is no exception when it comes to the amount of English texts its students have to read. They must read a minimum of five articles per week, and most research material is in English. At the beginning of each course, they receive a bibliography in which 80 per cent of the selected references may be in English. For many of these French-speaking students, panic sets in. Once students have embarked on a serious course of academic study, taking an English for Academic Purposes class is hardly a solution. The train has already left the station, so to speak.

The case study reported here is an innovative academic reading course for M.Sc. and Doctoral candidates studying in French but who were overwhelmed by an immediate need to comprehend a large volume of subject-specific material in English.

Non-productive Reading Strategies

L2 students often resort to reading strategies ranging from translating to underlining difficult words. Relying heavily on dictionaries is not efficient if the text requires frequent consultation. Looking up the definition of one word only to find another unfamiliar word in the definition provided, or an alternative meaning that doesn't match the context, can also result in confusion. More importantly, students often spend precious time trying to decipher words, expressions and segments of text at the expense of understanding the overall content.

For students with deadlines to meet (handing in projects or assignments, reading to prepare for an exam or class discussion, or conducting research for a thesis), checking every unfamiliar word or expression in a text is a luxury they cannot afford. They need productive strategies to help them extract meaning efficiently.

In response to these challenges, a 15-hour workshop was designed to train academic readers to: a) use pre-reading strategies, b) understand English text structure, and c) develop appropriate vocabulary-attack strategies.

Methodology

Limited to graduate students, the reading strategy seminars were conducted in French, although the reading material was in English. The rationale behind this approach was to make the strategies clear to students at various levels of English proficiency. It was also to replicate real contexts in which HEC Montréal students read in English but

follow classes and conduct discussions in the language of instruction, French.

It was made clear from the outset that the workshops were not to be mistaken for a place to practise English; we were not offering English courses. Discussion of the content of the articles was to be in French to allow all students to discuss and debate the issues raised in the texts. It would have been difficult to measure students' comprehension of the texts had the discussions been in English because of the obvious obstacles some of them would face due to low ESL proficiency levels.

Students were told that the workshops were not intended to add to their course load, but rather to give them tools that they could apply to their own reading. Sample articles were selected to identify and practise strategies in class, but students were to apply the techniques to their own reading over the following week.

Pre-reading Strategies

Each of the three pre-reading strategies had a different focus intended to sensitize students to the source and content of the texts they would read both inside and outside the reading strategy seminars.

Pre-reading Strategy 1

This activity aimed at developing a critical approach in which not every word was of equal value – a fact that initially escaped many of the students in their attempt to get meaning from the texts they were assigned.

Students were asked to analyse the first pages of seven different text structures with attention to the points below. They were asked to draw conclusions based on their examination of these points with respect to the seven sample articles.

- Source
- Author
- Date
- Abstract
- Title, subtitle
- Charts or graphs
- Bolding, textboxes, etc.
- References, bibliography

Pre-reading Strategy 2

This activity invited students to step back from the text and identify the overall meaning and organization of the article. These students, who considered themselves "serious" readers, were at first reluctant to begin the "real" reading immediately. "Real" reading to them meant starting with the first word, dictionary at the ready, and extracting meaning from each and every word in the text.

Students followed the steps outlined below to practise on several articles. It was pointed out that often the introductions contain especially difficult culturally-loaded vocabulary, yet not much, if any, key information.

- Skim the introduction
- Locate the thesis (a restatement of the subtitle of an article)
- Read sub-readings
- Check out visuals and captions
- Read conclusion

Pre-reading Strategy 3

The focus here was text structure. It was pointed out that cultures around the world differ in the manner in which they relay messages from speaker to listener and from writer to reader. A brief comparison was drawn between French text structure, which tends to be more elaborate, or, in English terms "flowery," and English text structure, which develops a thesis and then directly proceeds to support it.

The important point made here was the value of identifying the thesis statement and the model for presenting the main ideas – supporting details as the key to understanding an English text quickly and effectively. Again, this was shown in sample texts using the steps below. It was emphasized that knowing where important information was would free students from having to understand every word in a text.

- Thesis
- Scope of article
- Point of view
- Hints at organization
- First line of every paragraph
- Main idea of paragraphs
- Conclusion

Vocabulary Attack Strategies

L2 readers came to this course convinced that vocabulary was their biggest obstacle to understanding what they read. While students were trained in more important aspects of dealing with texts in English, vocabulary did remain a concern. Excerpts from the texts were used to generate samples of difficult vocabulary.

But the focus here was on distinguishing different types of vocabulary such as terms, acronyms, and obscure words they would not likely encounter again and could overlook.

Students also learned strategies, other than consulting a dictionary, for coping with unknown words.

Examples of how each of the following strategies could be applied were given:

(1) Using world knowledge: If you say, for instance, that policies in the USSR "shifted" after 1991, you don't need a dictionary to know that you are talking about "change".

(2) Distinguishing jargon and idioms from vocabulary: If you see a reference to "blue chip" stocks, for example, you can look up "blue" and "chip" and you won't be any further ahead **unless** you consult a specialized dictionary that deals with jargon and idioms.

(3) Omitting (skipping) words: You can save time if you know that a text may contain unknown or obscure words that you can skip without losing the meaning of a sentence or paragraph.

(4) Recognizing "signposts" in the text: Following referents, such as "this idea," helps the reader to keep track of the flow of ideas in the text. Recognizing transition markers that guide coherence and the relationship of ideas also helps greatly.

Feedback from Students

Students were asked during the last session whether they had tried the strategies in their own reading outside class, and whether it had made a difference. Their answers and observations were instructive.

Students had immediately used the strategies and reported that they were so pleased that they considered not coming to future sessions. Some felt that the strategies would have been useful in their undergraduate courses as well. They suggested that the course be offered, in other native languages, such as Arabic and Chinese.

Students reported that they would have liked to see more challenging materials integrated into the in-class sample texts. They surprised us by saying the specific field the texts were drawn from (accounting, marketing, etc.) was not a consideration since the material was relevant to all of their programs of study. They were more interested in discussing the articles in class with someone at the same stage of their program than with someone in the same area of interest.

Conclusion

The idea of giving a course on English reading strategies in French was an effective way of helping graduate students access English text material. Students initially resisted, but were won over by the benefit of pre-reading strategies, and they claimed to have applied them to great effect in their studies.

Two principle changes are being planned, based on the experience gained with this trial course. They are:

- No proper course plan was given out and we made the mistake of covering many important points, however superficially, in the first seminar. This, as student observations suggested, contributed to a poor turn-out in the second seminar before word-of-mouth brought the core students back.
- Grouping students by speciality was not effective. At times, the discussions degenerated into a competition on knowledge of the subject matter and not the content of the texts they were given. Students preferred to be grouped with their peers based on years of experience as students.

Analyzing a Form of Classroom Assessment: The Weekly Quiz

Xiaoying Wang

Introduction

The concept of curriculum has become expanded over the years from "plan for instruction" to "learner experiences as a result of schooling" to " interaction of plans and experiences which students complete under the guidance of a school."[1] This concept is actually becoming an umbrella term encompassing all the efforts and practices by educators to provide optimal learning opportunities and promote maximum learning to students. This paper focuses on teachers' classroom assessment as one aspect of such efforts and practices, and will examine a form of classroom assessment, the weekly quiz, which has long been used in an EFL context in China, to see how well it functions in enhancing student learning in its own context.

This paper is presented in five sections. The reasons for choosing this topic are provided first, followed by a brief description of the weekly quiz in its context. The third section reviews literature from the assessment field and curriculum field, and generates a theoretical framework for analyzing this type of classroom assessment. The fourth section analyzes the weekly quiz against the framework and discusses its merits and shortcomings in enhancing learning. The final section summarizes the discussion and suggests ways for improvement.

Reasons for Choosing this Topic

Two reasons prompted me to focus on this topic. First, the volume of literature on the subject validates the important role of classroom assessment. It has been increasingly documented and recognized that classroom assessment plays a significant role in determining the quality of instruction by generating useful information to teachers and shaping student learning by influencing their learning strategies, learning priorities, motivation and learning outcomes (e.g., Crooks, 1988; Stiggins, 1992; Stiggins, 2001). Therefore, classroom assessment practices deserve careful planning, implementation and examination.

Second, there are a few special features about the weekly quiz that make it worth examining. From my experience, both as a student, and teacher, this type of classroom assessment has been used with few changes to its format and marking scheme in the intensive reading course for first-year English majors at my university for more than ten years. Similar to the small-scale standardized test, held regularly at the end of each unit, the weekly quiz is intended to motivate students to work hard, help teachers check how well students have learned and determine if remedial work should be provided. With these important roles, it is worth evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of this assessment so that it can better support high-quality learning. In addition, this traditional practice has been used in the context of a revised national curriculum for English majors, since 2000. Therefore, it is also worth examining how effectively this practice meets the requirements of the revised curriculum.

Description of Weekly Quiz

Classroom assessments are context-specific, and one assessment may demonstrate high quality in one context but poor in another. Therefore, in this section, the context in which the weekly quiz is used is described first, namely, the policy context, the course in which it is used, and the students who write the quizzes. Then the features of its design and marking scheme, which are consistent across all the quizzes, are described.

Context of the Weekly Quiz

Policy context

In my university, fairness, interpreted as treating every student the same, is valued highly. The content, pace of instruction and assessment are coordinated and synchronized across classes. Students' final scores are converted from 100 per cent to a 2-5 point system, that is, 95-100 equals 5, 90-94 equals to 5-, and so on with every five per cent

as one point on the scale. The passing grade is 60 percent.

Course in which it is used

The weekly quiz is regularly used in the intensive reading course for the first-year English majors, which is considered the most important course; six hours per week is devoted to this course, while only two hours per week is devoted to other language skill courses such as speaking, listening or pronunciation.

This is a comprehensive course and its objectives are to improve students' abilities in: identifying the main idea of an article, identifying supporting details, inferring meaning from contexts, summarizing main ideas, synthesizing themes, appreciating the author's use of language, enlarging their vocabulary, learning to use an English-English dictionary, improving their pronunciation, and writing eligibly and properly.

This is a well-structured course. Over the 18-week semester, 16 texts are taught. The mid-term and final account for the other two weeks. The texts are of various genres, such as short stories, excerpts from biographies, articles on social issues, etc., and range from 1000 to 2000 words. After each text, there are comprehension questions, topics for discussion, and exercises on vocabulary and grammar.

Classroom instruction has focused on students' comprehension of the texts, vocabulary and grammar points that appeared in the texts. Emphasis is placed on the fact that students should understand every bit of each text. After an explanation of the text, teachers usually organize class discussions on topics related to the text but require students to draw on their own experiences, understanding and knowledge. This is to deepen their understanding of the topics and to improve their high-level cognitive thinking ability. In addition, teachers also spend some time asking students to read aloud and correcting their pronunciation mistakes, and occasionally asking students to look up a word in an E-E dictionary to find the meaning that suits the context. Before each quiz, teachers will emphasize the proper format (date, unit title, margins, neatness).

Students

The first-year English majors are all young adults who have passed the National College Entrance Examination with fairly high marks, especially in English. However, because they are from various geographical, economic, and educational backgrounds, their abilities to use English in the four language skills vary greatly. For example, in the intensive reading course, good students generally spend less than one hour previewing a new text and have about 20 new words, while struggling students sometimes spend more than three hours previewing the text and have more than 50 or 60 new words in one text. Therefore, each class is a mixed-ability group.

Features of the Weekly Quiz

Design features

All the quizzes used in the intensive reading course are text-based and consist of four elements: spelling dictation, word-formation, passage dictation and an essay question (See Appendix I). In the spelling element, teachers dictate 30 words taken from the just-studied text and students write them down in their exercise books. In the word-formation part, students are provided with ten words and ten related sentences with a blank in each sentence; they then are required to fill in the blanks with the appropriate forms of the words provided. In the passage dictation element, teachers dictate a passage of about 120 words, which students write down. The passage is related to the studied text in some way, (e.g., same topic), but is taken from elsewhere than the textbook. In the essay question element, students are asked to answer a question in essay form of about 120-150 words. The question is usually about the main ideas of the studied text. All the points to answer the question can be found in the text, and students are expected to recall these points and organize them into a coherent piece. It usually takes about 50 minutes to finish all four elements. Teachers take turns designing such quizzes.

Marking scheme

Teachers should follow a standard marking guideline: spelling accounts for 30 per cent of the mark, and any misspelled word costs one point. Word-formation accounts for 15 per cent, and any mistake in the required word costs 1.5 points. Dictation accounts for 25 per cent, and any mistake (spelling, punctuation, grammatical mistakes, intrusions, omissions, or capitalized letters) costs 0.5 point.

The last item, the essay question, accounts for 25 per cent. The total score of this item is divided into two parts: one for content and one for language. For content, a list of important points to be covered in the answer is provided, and students' answers are marked against the list. The score for each point is determined by its importance in the answer. When marking, teachers usually indicate incorrect or missed ideas and points deducted. For language, the same method of counting mistakes and deducting points is used. But, for this item, student mistakes are differentiated and categorized into several groups: one point per grammar mistake, two points per structural mistake, two points for overall coherence of the essay and 0.5 per spelling mistake. Teachers always underline students' mistakes, indicating what type of mistake it is, and some teachers will even correct the mistakes.

Format counts for five per cent, which means that students should write clearly, following a prescribed form that includes margins, specific place for title and data, double spacing, and legibility. If one's handwriting is messy and difficult to decipher, five per cent will be deducted.

Theoretical Framework for this Analysis

Stiggins (1999, 2001, 2002) advocated that classroom assessment should not only be *of* learning but also *for* learning. Assessment *of* learning is mainly concerned with determining the status of learning, while assessment *for* learning is mainly concerned with promoting greater learning (Stiggins, 2002, p. 761). For assessment *of* learning, validity and reliability in the measurement field are traditionally regarded as the framework to judge the quality of an assessment instrument (Bachman, 1990; Gallagher, 1998, Gronlund, 1998). For assessment *for* learning, the ICE approach to assessment may act as the criteria (Young & Wilson, 2000). The following part of this section illustrates each criterion and links it to the weekly quiz.

Validity refers to the extent to which an assessment instrument allows for correct and useful inferences about students' learning (Messick, 1989). This "soundness of judgment in the use of educational data" not only depends on the accuracy and adequacy of the information collected through assessment, but also on the quality of the judgment made about the information (Wilson, 1996, p. 140). However, because it is impossible to collect empirical data about the weekly quiz at the moment, only the first aspect of validity is of relevance here – more specifically, to what extent the weekly quiz can measure what it is supposed to measure, which is essentially a match/mismatch analysis. This paper focuses on the format and the marking scheme of the weekly quiz. Therefore, for this analysis, the validity issue becomes to what extent such format and marking scheme allows demonstration of the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire.

It has been pointed out that for a curriculum to be effective in schools, there should be alignment between curriculum objectives, classroom instruction and student assessment (English, 1992). The weekly quiz is one salient form of student assessment in its own context with three roles to play at the same time: a summative test, a formative test and a motivator. These roles should especially be aligned to curriculum objectives that are sound and worthwhile. The newly revised and enacted National Curriculum for English Majors (NCEM) in China (The English Team of the Foreign Language Teaching Directing Committee, 2000) puts a priority on societal needs without overlooking the needs of students and cultural traditions. It provides clear direction and focus for English programs and sets clear requirements for students at each level. Therefore, the analysis of the weekly quiz will use the curriculum requirements as the standards.

Reliability refers to the extent to which an assessment instrument can produce consistent results. Human judgment is a major source of error that can reduce reliability (Pratt, 1994). To reduce such error, the number of observations can be increased so that teachers get adequate information to make a valid judgment (Wilson, 1996). Therefore, for this analysis, the reliability issue becomes whether or not the weekly quiz provides teachers with accurate information about student learning. Because reliability is a prerequisite for validity, when validity is being examined, reliability is also being examined. Validity requires both adequate and accurate information about student learning.

For an assessment to enhance learning, an Ideas, Connections, and Extensions (ICE) approach should be adopted (Young & Wilson, 2000), which briefly reflects the three qualitatively different

stages of the learning process. Ideas are the building blocks of learning, Connections are reached when students can establish and articulate the relationships among ideas, and Extensions are made when learning is internalized and used in novel ways (Young & Wilson, 2000, p. 5). ICE allows for individual differences and is a framework to assess learning growth.

> "The ICE approach is useful in that students' progress is compared to where they started from, regardless of whether that starting point is far ahead, far behind, or on par with others in the same class. Teachers are then able to give individual students the advice and tasks they need to extend learning, no matter where along the continuum they are" (p. 2).

Therefore an assessment *for* learning should allow and encourage students to demonstrate their knowledge and ability all through the three levels. For the present analysis, the question is to what extent its format and marking scheme allows students to develop through all three levels.

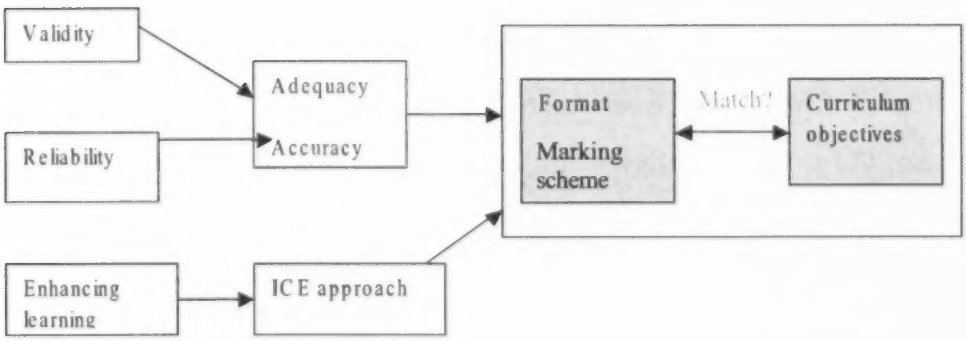
The following flow chart summarizes the framework.

Analysis and Discussion

In this section, the curriculum objectives related to this course as stated in the NCEM are provided first. What can be assessed in each item format is analyzed according to relevant theories and research findings, and then compared with the curriculum objectives. After that, the marking scheme is analyzed to find out the potential effects on student learning through the feedback generated from such a marking scheme. The ICE principle is applied to all the analyses. Finally, there is an overall discussion about the potential of the weekly quiz in generating adequate and accurate information about student learning and enhancing student learning.

Description of NCEM Requirements Related to this Course

NCEM specifies ten language skills and sets specific requirements for each language skill for each academic year (NCEM, pp. 5-11). The intensive reading course mainly addresses five of the ten language skills: grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing and use of reference books. The following presents the requirements for the five skills for level 2 (at the end of the first academic year).



- Grammar: Students should understand and be able to use the following grammatical knowledge: agreement between subject and verb, complex sentence structures, direct and indirect discourse, to do and –ing form of verbs, active and passive voice, tenses, and morphology.
- Vocabulary: Students should know 4000-5000 words of which they should be able to use 2000-2500 words and their collocations effectively.
- Reading: Students should be able to read simplified novels like *Thirty-Nine Steps* or materials like *Reader's Digest*, at the speed of 70-120 words per minute, and grasp the main ideas, main themes and main plots.
- Writing: Students should be – able to write a well-organized passage of 120-150 words relevant to the topic within 30 minutes; – able to adapt or shorten a text learned; – able to write a note and an announcement.
- Use of reference books: Students should be able to use an English-Chinese dictionary skillfully, and to independently solve their language problems using a simplified English-English dictionary like Oxford Advanced English Dictionary and Longman dictionary of contemporary English.

Format Analysis

Spelling dictation

Research shows that spelling dictation is an important exercise for children who are beginning to read and write because it helps to establish the link between auditory symbols of words with their visual symbols (Laminack and Wood, 1996). However, for our students who are already young adults, a spelling test becomes a test of simple memory and recall, because they have already established the link between the two kinds of symbols. Obviously, this item is related to the curriculum objective concerning vocabulary. However, there are different stages of knowing and being able to use a word (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982; Blachowicz & Lee, 1991). What can be tested in this format stays at the ideas level for our students.

Word formation

According to the classification of word knowledge provided by Taylor[2], this format tests word morphology in context. Because students are expected to supply the appropriate derivational forms of the words in the context of sentences, students have to link the morphological knowledge of the words with their grammatical functions as well as semantic meanings to make the sentences correct and meaningful. According to the ICE model, this format can test students' knowledge at both the Ideas level and the Connections level. However, comparing it with the curriculum objective concerning vocabulary, this format stays at the knowing stage and does not test students' use of vocabulary.

Blachowicz and Lee (1991) suggested that vocabulary acquisition is a continuous process that begins when students first recognize a word and apply a superficial meaning later when they are able to understand the various meanings and uses of that word. Our students are no longer beginners. Most of them know at least 3000 words upon their high school graduation. Their major task at university is to improve their language skills so that they can use English to communicate freely. Therefore, students are at a stage and ability in which they are ready to deepen their understanding of words. Therefore, it is very important to provide them with opportunities to use the words other than just their spelling, pronunciation or different forms.

Dictation

Dictation is regarded as an integrative test rather than a discrete-point test because it tests many aspects at the same time (Oller, 1979). It tests students' short term memory and their overall language ability, including discriminating strings of utterances, listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and background knowledge about the passage tested. Comparing these with the curriculum objectives, it can be seen that this item tests general language proficiency, and not anything specifically related to the course objectives. Therefore, students' scores on this element cannot be interpreted as an indication of what they have learned after the instruction of the text. According to the ICE model, this format allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills at the Ideas and Connections stages but not at the Extension stage.

Essay question

The essay question belongs to the supply type of assessment method because it asks students to

construct responses rather than select answers. By requiring students to compare, justify, contrast, compile, interpret, or formulate valid conclusions, it discourages rote testing and gives students the opportunity to display their broadest range of cognitive skills (Coker, Kolstad, & Sosa, 1988; Pratt, 1994; White, 1994). Therefore, this format allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through the three stages of the ICE.

However, the way the essay question in the weekly quiz is designed limits the potential of this format to Ideas and Connections. It excludes the Extension level. Because the essay questions are based on the texts, primarily requiring that students recall and organize their contents to answer the question. There is no element encouraging students to link what they have learned from the text to their own life or to reflect what they have learned. Referring to the curriculum objectives, this item is mainly concerned with writing rather than reading, although teachers use this item to check if students have understood a text after instruction. This item mainly tests students' summarizing skills, which let them demonstrate the Ideas level – the basic facts in a text – as well as the Connections level – the organization of those facts.

Marking scheme

The marking scheme used for the weekly quiz is quantitative, which may ensure a high degree of consistency in marking among classes. This reflects the school policy of treating every student fairly. However, a thorough analysis reveals that this way of marking is, in fact, not fair to students, cannot provide sufficient diagnostic information for both teachers and students, and may transmit misleading messages to students about what is important in learning.

This way of marking is unfair to students because the type of mistake is not differentiated, and, thus, fails to reveal the quality of learning. It has been pointed out that "the error patterns of [student] responses indicate a significant difference in their learning" (Young & Wilson, 2000, p. 48). Therefore, by treating all mistakes the same way, students who make careless mistakes may score the same as those who don't know the answer. And although mistakes are treated differently in the essay answers, the marking guide used emphasizes language accuracy and content recall, but cannot differentiate students who vary in their organization of ideas, depth of understanding, as reflected through their choice of words and language structures, and fluency of language. Consequently, two essays that are written correctly but different in the other aspects, may get the same score.

For the same reason, feedback to both teachers and students is not sufficiently diagnostic and informative. Generally, most teachers record only students' total scores, but do not keep a record of the specific mistakes students have made. Consequently, they have only a general impression of each student, but may not offer constructive help to individual students. Students can know the mistakes they have made, but may not know the reasons they made them or be clear about how to avoid them in future because they are neither classified nor explained.

The percentage each element is weighed may lead students to believe that learning English depends mainly on rote memorization. Among the four elements tested in a quiz, all but dictation require recall. Because the spelling element is completely dependent upon recall, in the essay element, students can score half the points if they remember the main ideas of the text. In addition, it is not reasonable that the spelling element carry more weight than the essay question. While essay questions test language use and writing abilities, spelling mainly tests rote memorization. Therefore, this marking scheme encourages rote memorization.

Overall Discussion

From the above analysis, it can be seen that there are discrepancies between what can and should be assessed through the weekly quiz as indicated by the curriculum. Such discrepancies lie in both breadth and depth. In terms of breadth, only a limited number of objectives are covered (vocabulary and summary writing), while many others are not assessed. The passage dictation item may reduce the validity of this assessment when the results are interpreted as indicators of how well students have learned the text. In terms of depth, this form of assessment restricts the demonstration of student learning (in vocabulary and summary writing) to the Ideas level and lower Connections level, and thus fails to promote learning to a higher level. It may also have negative effects on students' attitudes towards learning and adopting effective strategies to enhance learning.

It has been pointed out that it is difficult for one assessment to serve several purposes well at the same time (Pratt, 1994), but this is just the situation of the weekly quiz. Considering the fact that each class is a mixed-ability group and that students change over time, it should be difficult to capture various routes of student learning over time using just one uniform and rigid form of assessment. Therefore, as analyzed before, this assessment, alone, may not generate adequate and accurate information about student learning and may restrict learning to those limited aspects and, thus, to a lower level.

Suggestions for Improvement

It has been increasingly realized that to enhance learning, educational considerations, rather than psychometric or political ones, should drive assessment (Biggs, 1995; Stiggins, 2001, 2002). This is especially true in order to recognize students' different abilities in a dynamic classroom context. Therefore, it is not sufficient to try to improve the weekly quiz by improving its validity and reliability in the measurement sense. Rather, the guiding principle for its improvement should be how it can promote maximum learning in its own context. Considering the shortcomings of the weekly quiz as analyzed above, two general suggestions are offered here based on relevant literature.

First, to overcome its rigidness in terms of item format and time to use it, it is suggested that this form of assessment be broken down and integrated into instruction. In other words, the four items should not be marked but rather should be used as formative assessment appropriate during the process of instruction. It has also been pointed out that awarding marks to formative assessment "would be to permanently penalize students for the errors they make in the natural process of learning" (Pratt, 1994, p. 109). This is just the situation of the present weekly quiz. Therefore, to enhance learning, such assessments as spelling, dictation and word-formation can be conducted as part of instructional activities, and students can be asked to check their own answers. Such practices may provide more timely and diagnostic feedback to both teachers and students.

Second, to overcome the shortcoming of restricting learning to a lower level, it is suggested that alternative assessments be added and an ICE rubric be used in evaluating student performance. Recent developments in classroom assessment have generated many new forms such as portfolios, journals, reflections, etc. (McMillan, 1997) of classroom assessment. Because such alternative assessments are based on a constructivist view of learning (Biggs, 1995), they not only can engage students in higher-level cognitive thinking but can also reveal student learning processes and growth. Therefore, such alternative assessments may provide room for students to demonstrate their learning from a basic level through to a higher level.

A rubric is "the written-down version of the criteria, with all score points described and defined" (Arter & McTighe, 2001, p. 8). It is beneficial for teachers in ensuring consistency in scoring and improved instruction, and beneficial for students in clarifying the targets of learning, in understanding the nature of quality for performance and products, and in improving student motivation and achievement (Arter & McTighe, 2001). The ICE approach, which reflects the three qualitatively different stages of the process of learning, is a handy tool in qualitatively defining and classifying student answers and performance (Young & Wilson, 2000). Therefore, a rubric following the ICE approach is beneficial for both teaching and learning. This should be especially useful for supply-type assessments such as the essay question.

On the whole, the suggestions offered in the partial evaluation are tentative and general. To actually carry out such suggestions, training should be a first priority in order for teachers to improve their understanding of learning and teaching, and be equipped with the knowledge and skills to conduct effective classroom assessment so that high-quality learning will be enhanced.

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Appendix I: Weekly Quiz for Unit 3

I. Spelling (30%)

Christmas reconcile spasmodically vacant neighborhood

bleak trudge fictitious startle stretch token cluster album

jingle choke vicious crumble opportunity muster converse

invariably reluctant diploma disposition blurt interpreter

frustration ranking approximately dread

II. Word Formation (15%)

1. (hospital) He was ____ for further examination. (HOSPITALIZED)
2. (regular) The seasons come and go with ___. (REGULARITY)
3. (assume) John's ___ that he would win the prize proved incorrect. (ASSUMPTION)
4. (exclusion) Asian immigrants were ___ from the country in the early 1920's. (EXCLUDED)

5. (ridiculous) Boys often ___ their sisters' friends. (RIDICULE)
6. (admission) Journalists are rarely ___ to the region. (ADMITTED)
7. (famous) The Nobel Prizes have brought ___ to many people. (FAME)
8. (respond) She nodded in ___ to his greeting. (RESPONSE)
9. (absence) He was ___ from class again. (ABSENT)
10. (relief) Aspirin may help to ___ the pain. (RELIEVE)

III. Dictation (25%)

Although everyone enjoys Christmas Day, it is particularly enjoyed by children who get very excited because of the presents they know they are going to receive. Small children believe their presents are brought by Father Christmas.

Father Christmas is a kind old man who, the children are told, lives at the North Pole. He travels through the sky on a sledge which is pulled by reindeer and loaded with presents. Stopping on the roofs of houses, he enters by climbing down the chimney. When small children go to bed on Christmas Eve, they hang a stocking at the end of their beds. Their parents warn them not to try to look at Father Christmas or he will not leave them anything. When they wake up the next morning, they find their stockings filled with presents. Children are very excited on Christmas morning and always wake up early.

IV. Essay Question (25%)

Why did the author feel closer to his father that Christmas Eve?

Points:

- used to get presents from his aunt/ but this Christmas, no present/ wanted a token of love from his parents very much
- surprised by his father's suggestion of having a walk down the shopping area / expecting a present
- his father didn't buy anything/ he felt disappointed
- realized that his father didn't have enough money/ realized that his father loved him

(**Format: neat handwriting, margins, title and date, double-spacing (5%)**)

1 For a discussion of various definitions of curriculum, see Marsh, 1997; for an overview of the components of a curriculum, see Marsh, 1997; Pratt, 1994.

2 Belisle, T.A. Developing Vocabulary Knowledge in the Immersion Classroom. http://carla.acad.umn.edu/bridge-pdfs/bridge-1.1.pdf